University of Alberta

Mavis Gallant: a Translation of Four Selected Stories into Croatian, with Commentary

by

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Abstract

This thesis consists of a translation into Croatian of four short stories by Canadian writer Mavis Gallant (1922 –): "The Other Paris" (1953), "In Transit" (1965), "From Cloud to Cloud" (1985), and "A State of Affairs" (1991), which represent the dominant variety of Gallant's thematic concerns, her style and settings. The translation is accompanied by a critical commentary that reflects on several topics: Mavis Gallant's career, the characteristics of her writing, her place in the context of Canadian literature; the state of contemporary literature in Croatia, and the history of the short story genre in both Canada and Croatia. The commentary reflects critically on the issues dominating translation studies, and on the approaches that most influenced the translation process. The translation aims to render Gallant's unique voice and style recognizable in the target language. Also discussed are specific linguistic problems, and other difficulties that occurred on various levels of translation.

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Introduction

The peculiar and rather thankless position of the translator has been much discussed. Translators are not creators of the same kind as original writers are, and thus can never get as much of the glory; yet they are exceptionally subject to criticism of all sorts, either by scholars not familiar with the source language who may blame the translator for the faults of the author, or those very familiar with the source and the language and eager to point out discrepancies and deformations. The status of the literary translator has, however, improved over time, in important practical matters. At a UNESCO conference in Nairobi in 1976, the member states adopted a Recommendation on the Legal Protection of Translators and Translation and the Practical Means to improve the Status of Translators[1]. In Canada, the Literary Translators' Association of Canada has obtained for translators a codified recognition of translations as literary works in the Canadian Copyright Act, and entitlement to fifty percent of the Public Lending Right payments (website of the Literary Translators' Association of Canada). Translators' associations, the growing authority of the field of translation studies in academic institutions, and numerous publications in the field add to the perception of importance of the translator's difficult work.

The literary translator is dealing with rather unpredictable material. What might emerge from a literary work in terms of impression or interpretation always retains an element of mystery that we cannot fully account for by neither rigorous linguistic analysis nor close reading and interpretation. The nature of the literary work is such that it is never fully understood; there is an inescapable 'x factor' in good works of literature, an effect of the whole that is always more than the sum of its parts. Mavis Gallant remarked that "fiction, like painting, consists entirely of more than meets the eye; otherwise it is not worth a second's consideration" (*Home* xii). With this pronouncement in mind, we can see very quickly that literary translation occurs on a level beyond the 'literal,' that the translator deals with more than the substitution of words and must attend to often elusive, shifting, hard-to-pin-down kind of material. Waldrop's insights about the destruction unavoidable in literary translation bring us a step closer to describing what happens in the process and what we have in the shape of a product of translation. Things will be lost and this seems unavoidable; but loss is not peculiar to translation, but is rather part of "the destructive aspect of all creation" (Waldrop 45). The words are original in so far as they are a new creation in this language, and in that they will represent an original encounter for their audience.

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[1] <http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13089&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html>, June 23rd, 2006

Why Mavis Gallant?

Mavis Gallant is a world-class master of the short story, and widely translated. That said, her work has yet to be translated into the Croatian language, with the exception of the story 'My Heart is Broken,' which appeared in an anthology of the Canadian short story that was published in 1991 (*Antologija Kanadske Pripovijetke*, Zagreb: Nakladni Zavod Matice Hrvatske). Canadian authors on the whole are not entirely unknown to Croatian audiences; cultural contact between Canada and Croatia in recent history has been strong, although subject to interruptions. The homepage of the Croatian-Canadian Academic Society notes that there is a history of Canadian Studies

(CS) in Croatia that has "traditionally…focused on culture, in particular literature" although now "interest extends beyond this area of study to include philosophy, law and political science." Before the dissolution of Yugoslavia, this cultural contact took place under the umbrella of the Yugoslav Canadian Studies Association. Activities were interrupted in the context of Yugoslavia's disintegration, but have been resumed successfully in recent years. Several Canadian writers had visited Croatia as lecturers in the late 1980s – Barry Callaghan, Myrna Kostash, Lorna Crozier, and Northrop Frye, among others. Visiting lecturers since Croatia's war of secession include Leon Rooke and Nicole Brossard. That Canadian Studies have been resumed with vigour in Croatia is clear when we consider that in the year 2004 alone, four conferences were held that had Canadian themes (two of those were-literature centred); further, a number of Canadian content courses are currently offered at the University of Zagreb, at the MA and BA levels. The above website notes (rather amusingly) that "[t]here are at least four students per year writing a BA thesis in Margaret Atwood" (<http://www-old.unizg.hr/hkad/index.htm>).

As regards translations of literature, a number of contemporary Canadian writers have been translated, relatively recently, into Croatian. Precise and verifiable statistics are not easily available, but the above website places the number of translations of works by Canadian authors at forty-four. Out of these, the majority are translations from English; translations from the French language currently stand at three. Among the totality of these translations are five novels from Margaret Atwood, five works by Michael Ondaatje, an anthology (above mentioned) of the Canadian short story, as well as works by Leonard Cohen, Barry Callaghan, Douglas Coupland, Robertson Davies, Carol Shields, and Leon Rooke among others. A number of individual Canadian short stories (and critical articles on Canadian literature) have also appeared in journals, magazines and anthologies. (An anthology of English-language short stories which appeared in 2001, *Vrhunski safari: kroz carstvo engleskog jezika*, includes the work of Canadians Guy Vanderhaeghe, Alice Munro, Leon Rooke, Margaret Atwood, and Rohinton Mistry.)

It might be interesting to examine why certain Canadian works have been translated into Croatian over others, though that is beyond the scope of this thesis. It seems that in this case there is some connection between the Canadian works that have been translated and published in Croatia and the relative canonical stature of those same texts in the original culture. So we see that the largest number of translations appearing are works by those who are already, arguably, Canada's most internationally known writers – Atwood and Ondaatje. The other literary translations are also works by authors who are critically confirmed Canadian greats. It is perhaps possible then that Gallant's ambiguous relation to Canada and its literary establishment is in part responsible for the near-absence of her work on Croatia's market and in its academia (a point to be discussed below). This thesis, which hopes to find a publisher in Croatia, seeks then to help remedy this situation, and to provide the Croatian public with a fuller and wider impression of Canadian literature and the Canadian short story especially; and to acquaint it with a unique voice – the kind of writing voice that enriches any literary landscape, and the personal landscapes of its readers.

Situating Gallant

Gallant's place in the Canadian literary tradition is an attested one. For the major part of her writing life, since 1950, Gallant has lived in Europe, of her own volition. Her stories have found an early (1951, "Madelaine's Birthday"), and most constant home in the *New Yorker*. She has written more about North Americans, Parisians, and central Europeans, than about Canadians. Her carefully delineated settings too, are as commonly, or more so, European, as they are Canadian. A number of critics have cited this apparent distancing from the Canadian literary establishment as the reason for the relatively late critical acclaim of her work in Canada. Scholarly work about Gallant's fiction began to appear in the early 1970s, although she had been publishing stories in magazines since 1944 and her first collection, *The Other Paris*, appeared in 1955. The critical attention paid to her work proliferated in the 1970s and 1980s. Both *Canadian Fiction Magazine* in 1978, and *Essays on Canadian Writing* in 1986, devoted an entire issue to Gallant's fiction. For a period it seemed as if the peak of critical attention for her work would remain in the 1970s and 80s, with only one significant book-length study appearing in 1998, by Danielle Schaub. But there have been two recent books of new essays: *Varieties of Exile* in 2002, and *Transient Questions* in 2004, considering both Gallant's older work, and, significantly, her more recent work, for which criticism has been lacking for some years. Gallant received the Governor General's Award in 1981 for the collection *Home Truths: Canadian Stories*, which naturally helped push her toward the Canadian literary spotlight in the 1980s.

E.D. Blodgett notes that "had Gallant chosen to make a more Canadian career, indigenous awards might have been more generous" (1).

Others have also observed that it may have been the public's mistrustful attitude toward the genuineness of Gallant's Canadian identity that has coloured the reception of her work in her home country. Gallant herself has no difficulty as regards her own 'Canadianness,' as she has said in interviews and most notably in her introduction to *Home Truths*: "My logical reason [for thinking herself Canadian] is that I have never been anything else, nor has it occurred to me that I might be" (xiii). In this same oft-cited introduction, Gallant also addresses her relation, as a writer, to her Canadian public: "I often have the feeling with Canadian readers that I am on trial" (xii). The feeling has to do with the public's implicit expectation that a Canadian writer should 'write Canadian,' and on this point Gallant is clear: "a citizen obviously owes more to his own country than to any other....but where his work is concerned, the writer, like any other artist, owes no more and no less to his compatriots than to people at large" (xiii).

Nearly all more recent critics who have written about her work (Besner, Kulyk-Keefer, Schaub, O'Rourke) have set out to correct this skewed perception of Gallant's 'allegiances.' Schaub writes that "as a writer with a strong sense of her Canadian identity, Gallant should be situated in the Canadian context" (*Mavis* 5). In this context Schaub sees her as a writer who has stayed apart from Canadian literary trends: "she developed on the margins of the local tradition by keeping aloof from the counterculture and nationalist writing of the sixties and seventies that evolved into the postmodernist revival. She has not shown interest in this kind of writing" (*Mavis* 5-6). W.H. New situates Gallant in the company of Canadian writers such as Hugh Hood, Margaret Laurence, Michel Tremblay and Alice Munro, based on the interaction of history and subjectivity in their work in the 60s and 70s (*History* 230). Gallant's concern with history is nearly-ever present in her writing, clear already in "The Other Paris" and continued throughout her career; it is perhaps most notable in the collection *The Pegnitz Junction*, heavily involved with WWII and Germany in particular, a "book about where Fascism came from" (Gallant in Hancock interview 41), which she wrote to find in ordinary life "the origin of the worm – the worm that had destroyed the structure" (Gallant in Hancock interview 40). The strong presence of the Second World War in her work is shared by Margaret Laurence and Hugh Hood (New *History* 231); they all came of age in the war years, possibly the reason why it in particular "focuses their moral concern with social conduct" (New *History* 232). Robert Weaver observes that, in terms of a generation, Gallant is also in the company of Margaret Laurence, Mordecai Richler, and Norman Levine, "all of whom have lived abroad for long periods without forfeiting their identity as Canadian writers, but [Gallant] has come to seem the complete expatriate" (7). In her strong preference for the short story form, Gallant is comparable only to Alice Munro in the Canadian tradition.

As to the status of the short story in contemporary Canada, it still seems to be considered a marginal form in the publishing circles. Young writers who can get a story collection accepted by a larger publisher, are typically expected (and often sign contracts to this end) to follow it up with a novel. While short stories have been awarded the highest literary awards in the country (the Governor General's award for fiction has been bestowed on Alice Munro's first story collection *Dance of the Happy*

Shades in 1968, Guy Vanderhaeghe's *Man Descending* in 1982, Gallant's *Home Truths* in 1981, Greg Hollingshead's *The Roaring Girl* in 1995, among others), Lynch is correct in observing that when it comes to fiction, "novels…remain the order of the day" (1045).

Gallant's writing is realist in its careful and detailed depictions of historical settings (1930s Montreal, 1950s and 1990s Paris, etc.), which in some stories is nearly documentary (the Linnet Muir sequence, for example). She is not a straight-forward realist, and the subjective points of view given voice in her fictions are more modernist. Gallant's stories are characteristically told by a relatively detached third-person narrator whose perspective is often alternated with subjective perspectives of the characters, sometimes resulting in uncertainty and dislocation for the reader. She takes advantage of 'abrupt transitions' to leave unexplained gaps in the situations for the reader to piece together (Schaub, *Mavis* 148). The psychological realism expected of realist fiction is not typically found in Gallant's work. The irony that in large part defines her writing's style has as its concomitant a kind of self-awareness that establishes her stylistic imprint, or what some see as her brand of realism. Neil Besner observes correctly that Gallant's realism is as reflexive as it is referential, and that this kind of reflexive fiction is neither atypical of nor necessarily opposed to realism ("Broken Dialogue" 93). Schaub sees in her fiction a 'postmodern trend' which has been 'overlooked by critics' (*Mavis* 187, note); she stresses "Gallant's clever exploitation of narrative strategies, more subtly postmodern than those of George Bowering, Audrey Thomas, and Rudy Wiebe, for instance" (*Mavis* 8). Ultimately, it is of limited relevance here whether we choose to see her writing as 'essentially realist,' 'a modern anachronism' (Schaub, *Mavis* 6), or 'subtly postmodern.' Mavis Gallant has said, sensibly, about style, that it is "inseparable from structure, part of the conformation of whatever the author has to say" ("What is Style?" 177), and also that "if it is not a true voice, it is nothing" ("What is Style?" 179). The authority of the voice lies in its authenticity, and in it is the writer's significance.

Characterizing Gallant's fiction

Gallant writes most often in a third-person voice; she has written first-person narratives, including the novella "Its image on the mirror," but these are decidedly in the minority. Gallant's particular narratorial perspective is one of the most characteristic features of her writing. Her narrators tend to observe events from a detached and aloof perspective; they are authoritative and capable of omniscience, yet – and importantly – their perspective is typically modified by other, subjective points of view that can be attributed (not always with certainty) to characters in the story. Schaub notes that the "oscillation between omniscience and limited perspective" is "a recurrent feature of Gallant's fiction" (*Mavis* 144); Gadpaille speaks of "the distilled omniscience of her characteristic narrator" which "has marked out a fictional territory that Gallant owns" (56). The seemingly incongruous combination of an authoritative third-person narrator with a multiplicity of perspectives that undercut a single and secure interpretation of events is Gallant's thumbprint, responsible for much of the unique complexity of effect evoked by her fictions.

Irony is near-universally present in Gallant's work, inherent in the tone as well as a result of stylistic and thematic juxtapositions. (Thus, in 'The Other Paris,' the oppositions between Carol's imagined Paris, and the real, historical, war-burdened Paris of the 1950s, ironically reflect on Carol's romantic, ahistorical mindset, as well as her specifically WASP mentality.) As for Gallant's language, it is fairly standard English. Often praised for her rhythmic sentences (Besner, *Light* 5), she has remarked that in reading her work aloud, she is "conscious of a prose rhythm easy for [her] to follow, that must be near to the way [she] think[s] and speak[s]" ("What is Style?" 176), and that her 'manner of writing' "may with time have grown instinctive" ("What is Style?" 176). Danielle Schaub characterizes Gallant's language as "relatively simple, everyday language of predominantly Anglo-Saxon origin" (*Mavis* 162) and speaks of "Gallant's predilection for…colloquial idioms…and unaffected language" (*Mavis* 143). Her precision of detail encompasses gesture, tone of voice, style of furniture, the atmosphere of a neighbourhood, accent, emotional undercurrent, the shape of a face. She is especially known, as mentioned, for her detailed evocations of setting, which are closely related to the concern with and treatment of history in her stories. Her chosen settings are primarily Paris, Montreal, Germany and the French Riviera, and this holds for the span of her career; Michelle Gadpaille observes that "[h]er first collection, *The Other Paris*…presents the four settings that appear in three-quarters of all Gallant's stories" (38).

The concern with exile and displacement in her work has also been widely discussed in critical literature. Her characters are Americans, Canadians, Europeans (French, Germans, Poles, Spaniards, Romanians), displaced for a variety of reasons in a place other than their home country. They are refugees, travellers, diplomats, vacationers, former soldiers, foreign workers. Gadpaille speaks of Gallant's "preoccupation with the rootless foreigner – American, Canadian, or European – stranded in a European setting" (38). Diane Simmons rightly notes that "[l]ife abroad is Gallant's pervasive metaphor, not only for exile but also for the self-exile that inevitably follows" (29). Exile, memory, and history are the most pervasive of Gallant's concerns, informing both theme and style. David O'Rourke makes the important point that "[e]xile may well be Gallant's preoccupation, but it is not so much an exile of space as it is one of time" (98). Gallant's characters are often history's exiles – displaced by war, by a changed society in which they can no longer find their place; they are also exiles in their own personal history – trapped in a life situation that they are unable to undo, incapable of reversing time or of finding insight that might deliver them. Schaub asserts that Gallant "charges the atmosphere of her stories with a wealth of references to spatial constituents which highlight the social, religious and cultural limitations imposed on the characters. As a result, the characters live 'small lives of their own creation' (HT 239)" ("Canadian Culture" 101). The act of literary translation, it might be noted, can, at its best, work against cultural restrictions and cultural chauvinism, and so against the forces that contribute to people living 'small lives.'

Displacement is a condition that has become, in the last decade and a half, familiar to the population of much of former Yugoslavia, and therefore Croatia as well. The recent history of the region includes both a drastic overhaul of official ideology that occurred with the fall of communism, and a number of wars with far-reaching consequences. It is possible to think that Gallant's themes of exile may be met with interest in such a population, though it is perhaps equally likely that readers who have suffered displacement themselves may wish to escape the topic rather than read about it. Croatian literature in the post-war years has addressed the topic of war and disintegration in both documentary and fictional, even fantastic, prose. The taste of the public in this regard is difficult to evaluate; it seems to consume literature that mirrors its present concerns as much as literature that is far removed from it.

The Croatian literary context

The short story genre

The short story genre has a long tradition in Croatian literature, as it does in the history of Canadian literature. Before continuing this discussion it will be helpful to clarify a matter of terminology, namely what terms are used to designate this genre in the Croatian as opposed to the Canadian or English-language context. In Croatian, several terms are in use for designating shorter forms of fiction: 'novela,' 'kratka priča,' and 'pripovijetka' or 'pripovijest'. 'Kratka priča' is a literal rendering of the English term short story and has entered the Croatian language in recent years as one example of the strong recent influence of English language and culture. 'Novela,' as it would appear to, often does correspond to what in English is termed the novella. Milivoj Solar, in his *Teorija Književnosti* (*The Theory of Literature*), which has been used for decades as a textbook and reference text, generalizes the term 'novela' to include all shorter forms of prose. He notes correctly that all of the above-mentioned terms are also in use without being precisely defined, and that while there are often attempts to narrow the definitions, there is no significant agreement among theorists in this regard

(211). Canadian literary tradition differentiates between the novella and the short story on the basis of length, while in Croatia this distinction does not always hold.

Publishers and editors of short stories also do not agree in their terminology. The publisher Naklada MD titles all of its numerous short story anthologies with 'kratka priča,' as does Miroslav Šicel in an influential compilation *Antologija hrvatske kratke priče*. Krešimir Nemec, however, in an equally central anthology *Hrvatski pripovjedači* (2001), uses the term 'novela,' although his selections range in length from six to twenty eight pages, what in Canada we would consider an average range for short stories. He also notes 'the plurality of forms characterizing the novela production of the last fifteen years' (9, English rephrasing mine), and agrees with Solar that 'kratka priča' is a shorter form of the 'novela' (which would make it an indeed very short story). The genre is somewhat similarly undefined in Canada as well – Lynch shows that the various designations that divide prose narratives, such as sketch, short story, tales, novellas, nouvelles, contes, etc., are "open to contradiction" (1041). The natural and necessary crossing of so-called boundaries between genres makes for a harder job for the literary historian, and is part of the difficulty of defining precisely equivalent terms between languages; this difficulty is of course also fitting as a reminder of the rootedness of words in their cultural and historical contexts.

Critics agree that the short story, however defined, has been experiencing a revival in Croatia in the last two decades or so. There is a proliferation of short story contests, in newspapers such as the daily *Večernji List*, as well as online. Also notable is the recent emergence of creative writing workshops, which are often designed specifically for short story writing, and have adopted their terminology directly from the

English-speaking world (North America primarily) (a common phenomenon of course when foreign cultural practices are adopted for which no precise terms exist in the receiving culture). Thus 'kreativno pisanje' or 'radionica kreativnog pisanja' are direct translations of 'creative writing' and 'creative writing workshop.' Referring to the Croatian literary scene, Bagić speaks of "the change in status of the short story" (7, my translation) and notes that in the last two decades of the twentieth century, the short story has grown "from a marginal…into a prestigious genre and stepped out from the deep shadow of the novel in which it had until then resided" (7, my translation). He goes as far as to claim that in this period the short story "quantitatively and qualitatively led the way in relation to other prose forms" (5, my translation). The short story of the eighties was characterized by self-referentiality, and subsequent putting into question the very act of writing; the nineties, in contrast, strove for communicative texts and simple solutions (Bagić 8). In the early nineties, realities of war manifested themselves in prose that leaned toward fact, autobiography, 'true stories,' documentary (Bagić 10). But soon the war began to be fictionalized, and Bagić singles out three major tendencies in these fictions: critical mimesis, escapism, and interdiscursivity (11). There is continuity between the characteristics of these decades and it can be said that contemporary Croatian short fiction is dominated by self-awareness, discontinuity of narrative, urban settings and 'urban language,' marginal experience and marginal characters (drug addicts, thieves, former soldiers), polyphony and heterogeneity (12).

Gallant's aesthetic in the Croatian literary context

The short fiction of Mavis Gallant does not appear to share characteristics with the above tendencies. Her fiction is not so overtly self-referential, undermining of the very ground that is language, as to resemble the fictions that some Croatian writers produced in the eighties (Boris Gregorić, Carmen Klein), fictions that often appear to be philosophical and linguistic exercises. As Kulyk Keefer rightly observes, Gallant "does not write fiction about the delight or difficulties of writing fiction; she does not agonize over the ingrained deceitfulness of language, its parade of substance over the chasm of silence" (58). Neither is it easy to find a connection between Gallant's aesthetic and the gritty, raw, quick tales, often fantastic, told in colloquialism or street language, that dominated the nineties and continue to appear today (by writers such as Zoran Ferić, Edo Popović, Borivoj Radaković, Davor Slamnig, etc.). Yet there are elements in her fiction which are not foreign to postmodern trends – discontinuous narrative and shifting perspective, less-than-conclusive endings. The concern with history is observed among Croatian writers as well, and in writers of an older generation like Irena Vrkljan, or Pavao Pavličić, we also find some similar concerns with both memory and history. On a broad level, the theme of the individual's exile in space and time can be discerned in the tales of socially marginalized characters common in Croatian short fiction. The treatment of the theme is nonetheless, as noted, quite different. Within my scope of knowledge there are no writers that might be compared to Gallant in terms of style. This brief discussion of the contemporary short story, and literary scene in Croatia serves to colour the context, which a translation of Gallant's stories, were it to be published in the near future, would be entering.

Trends in publication of translated works of literature

This translation from English into Croatian comes at a time when there is an abundance of translations from the English language, literary and otherwise, on the Croatian market. From this perspective, this translation, if published, would be contributing to a cultural flow that is unfortunately rather one-sided. It is also unfortunate that the works that cross the language barrier and make it across the ocean are more often than not mass-market paperbacks and best-selling thrillers and romances. The most prominent shelves of many Croatian bookstores are lined with Danielle Steels, Dan Browns, and Sydney Sheldons. The large percentage of the Croatian publishing market that is occupied by foreign works in translation fits with a larger trend in which smaller, 'marginal' cultures publish translations in large quantities while larger, globally more influential cultures tend to export a lot of their domestic literature, and publish translations from international languages only minimally. Susan Basnett confirms that "Even-Zohar's suggestion that a marginal, new, insecure or weakened culture tends to translate more texts than a culture in a state of relative centrality and strength is borne out by numerous case studies of situations" (xii). Venuti observes that "[t]ranslation patterns since World War II indicate the overwhelming domination of English language cultures" (*Scandals* 160), noting also that "English has become the most translated language worldwide" while it continues to be "one of the least translated into" (*Scandals* 160). A variety of statistics show the ill-balanced global patterns of translation. In Brazil, 60 percent of new books in 1994 were translations, and 75 percent of those were from English; in the United States, in the same year, 2.74 percent of the total quantity of new titles were translations, with the largest numbers belonging to French and German, and only 17 translations from Arabic (Venuti, *Scandals* 160). According to UNESCO statistics[2] (which include all translations, not only literary ones), English is by a huge margin the language most translated out of (and actually has been for decades): 46,311 translations are cited for the year 2002, 42,679 in 1995, and 27,238 in 1990. French, German and Russian follow English on the list of languages with the largest number of translations, but they are far behind. French is cited at 6,624 translations in 2002 and 6,338 in 1995. Translations from Croatian are similar in number to translations from other smaller European languages; 156 in 2002 and 120 in 1995. If the statistics are accurate, English translations appearing on the Croatian market in 2003 numbered 6414, while Croatian publications numbered only 912.

Translation approach and methodology

My approach to this translation was influenced by two, at times opposing, approaches to the role and nature of literary translation. One is what Neubert terms the text-linguistic approach (22), which sees translation as an act of discursive communication. Venuti observes that linguistic analysis was at the optimistic extreme of the scale in mid-twentieth century translation studies, partly because it held a view of language as communicative rather than constitutive of meaning (*TSR* 113). The text-linguistic approach fits broadly at this optimistic end of the spectrum (the spectrum that stretches at its other end to scepticism toward any possibility of translatability). The other approach is what Neubert called the sociocultural model (25). This approach is led by notions of the embeddedness of language and of text in its social, cultural and historical moment. It is aimed at the preservation of this specificity and concerned, primarily, with avoiding the ethnocentrism that translations, especially so-called domesticating ones, often display. This approach requires that something of the source text's 'foreignness' is carried over to the target text, that the target text contain, in Venuti's terms, 'an inscription of the foreign' ("Translation, Community" 483). My reason for combining these two approaches lies in the view that they are complementary, and that together they address the paradoxical but unavoidable nature of literary translation.

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[2] All statistics are from the UNESCO website

As practice has shown in the form of thousands of literary translations, a significant 'something' is carried over when a novel, or poem, or play, gets translated into another language. Communication occurs, however we may choose to evaluate its quality, or its 'faithfulness.' Beyond this basic communication – which may well be unsatisfactory or deforming of the original – we have also seen that occasionally the communication of a literary text in another language can illuminate and preserve the original to the point that scholars and readers can meaningfully discurse about the given work even if they have accessed it in different languages. Yet, a literary text is never 'repeatable' in another language, just as its refractions (in Lefevere's terms), or its intralingual and intersemiotic translations cannot claim to be 'equivalent' to the text in any true sense of that word. So, a translated text is necessarily communicative and necessarily in a significant way 'related' to its source text; yet it also alters the original and is inevitably an autonomous event in its own context, as unrepeatable as its original source. What this view leads to in the translation process is a negotiation between so-called domesticating and foreignizing tendencies. I preserved as much as possible the text-linguistic markers of Gallant's style, but also made concessions to certain target language norms of good writing. I did both in an attempt to accurately render Gallant's voice – its modified authoritativeness, narrative distance, and dry irony. I avoided breaking apart or joining together sentences. Preference for simple and compound sentences is significant to Gallant's style, and rearranging sentences so that they become complex, for example, would have meant losing some stylistic effect. Grammatical categories were changed if required by sentence structure or flow. Passive sentences were often rendered active by necessity, since Croatian uses passive sentences less commonly and less easily than English. Word order could typically not be preserved; it was perhaps the most common change I inflicted on the original. Differences in word order rules between the two languages partly dictated these changes, which were made so that the translation would not read as stilted to target audiences. The English language has largely lost its grammatical forms, while Croatian has preserved many inflexions, making meaning less dependent on word order. Adhering blindly to original word order would have destroyed the writing's rhythm. Rearranging word order required an element of interpretation involving stress, tone, rhythm and effect – what is the sentence or phrase stressing, is the word order marked for a particular emphasis, is there an ironic effect in the juxtaposition of words, or a discernible rhythm?

I did not want to domesticate the work unnecessarily; I did not go to great lengths to make constructions and turns of phrase sound entirely ordinary to target-language ears, and accepted that certain things may sound slightly unusual (they should not sound so unusual as to hinder readability or create jarring effects where there are none in the original). References to customs that may be unfamiliar were left to the care of the reader, in the belief that a reader can grasp when things that may appear strange to him are not in fact strange in the world of the text. French place names, personal titles and occasional foreign words were left the same as in the original. These and other problems and solutions that arose in the process of this translation will be discussed in more detail below.

Evident in my approach is my opposition to certain versions of what Nida termed dynamic equivalence, which, at its extreme, can be artificial and even fraudulent. In 1964, Nida defined dynamic equivalence as based on equivalence of effect (*Toward* 159), while formal equivalence, in contrast, "focuses attentions on the message itself, in both form and content" (159), attempts to "reproduce as literally and meaningfully as possible the form and content of the original" (159). The latter definition seems slightly contradictory, since 'most literally' and 'most meaningfully' do not necessarily coincide. In terms of equally respecting form and content, however, this approach seems in fact acceptable and well-rounded. A translation employing formal correspondence as an approach allows the reader "to identify himself as fully as possible with a person in the source-language context, and to understand as much as he can of the customs, manner of thought, and means of expression" of the original context (*Toward* 159). In 1969 Nida again explained dynamic equivalence as "defined in terms of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language" (*Theory* 24). In the same text, formal equivalence is defined as a kind of literal, mechanical reproduction of the form of the source text language (27-8; 203). The latter equivalence is rejected by Nida, who believes in the priority of meaning, and of the needs of the audience, over style and forms of language. It is notable that the later description of formal correspondence stresses that it is a formally literal kind of approach, and does not mention the message or content as part of it. My objection to Nida's version of dynamic equivalence concerns the fact that it "aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture" and "does not insist that he understand the cultural patterns of the source-language context in order to comprehend the message" (*Toward* 159). Further, the function that the literary text served in its initial context cannot be contained in a single definition, nor is it always easy to define 'the response of the original receptors.' Most literary texts are received by a multiplicity of audiences, and rarely by one easily identifiable homogenous demographic. Mavis Gallant's stories, for example, often appeared individually in the *New Yorker*, before being included in collections published frequently simultaneously in Canada and the United States. Therefore, to speak of the initial effect that the original had on its inaugural audience would prove to be difficult; it would necessarily have to be multifaceted and inclusive. Would we consider the original audience to be that audience that read the collection in its first edition, even if an edition appeared in another country very soon afterwards? Or would we consider the original audience the audience that reads the *New Yorker*, if that is where an original story first appeared? This questioning is not to suggest that it is impossible to make critical judgements about a work's reception following its first publication, and especially not to suggest that we should not attempt to trace the historical progression of a literary work's reception (if it is an enduring work). In the cases where something like an 'original response' can be defined, it is still a questionable matter whether the effects can or should be reproduced. If we consider, for example, the effect Balzac's realist novels had on their 19th century audience and the changes they effected in literary history, it is quite clear that we cannot attempt to recreate in a 21st century translation those effects of shock and defamiliarization that Balzac's novels, with their ordinary and pessimistic subjects and particular manner of description, had on their original audience. Similarly, to recreate the world of 19th century Paris using reference points from whatever the translation's target culture is – say, 20th century Prague, would result in something slightly ridiculous and suspect to the reader. An approach based on an extreme interpretation of functional equivalence can, at its worst, undermine the historical and cultural specificity of a work; it can deny the readers the knowledge of a particular context-dependent custom, and by draping over such a glimpse into another world with a domestic reference, force the work to wear an artificial mask of familiarity that hides difference and obscures historicity.

Central issues in the study and practice of translation

Throughout the long history of translation the basic conflict appears to have stayed more or less the same, under various guises: it reflects the split between meaning and form, and manifests itself in the opposition between translating literally, word-for-word, at one end of the spectrum, and translating for the meaning, the so-called spirit of the text at the other end. Nida's influential formulation of formal and dynamic equivalence is also of course based on this distinction, and is one of a number of formulations. The 1960s and 70s especially saw this distinction redrawn with various terminology, and informed by, among other things, linguistics-based approaches (Venuti, *TSR* 148).

The pendulum of favour swung between these tendencies, and so at different times different approaches were popular and accepted. Other factors have contributed to the degree of liberty translators felt they could take with their source, an important one being the real or perceived relations between the source and target cultures and languages. Thus Abbé Prévost, in his translation into French of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, felt free to alter the text significantly due to what he perceived as British inferiority of customs (Lefevere, *Translating* 118); there are of course examples of many Asian and Indian texts that were completely altered by translators who were often aligned with colonial powers. The twentieth century saw a number of developments that changed the status and methodologies of translation. Venuti sees the translation trends of the first three decades of the twentieth century as rooted in German literary and philosophical traditions: Romanticism, hermeneutics, and existential phenomenology; these ideas coexisted with, and were influenced by, modernist movements that emphasized formal experiments (Venuti, *TSR* 71). Venuti also tributes this period with the development of the autonomy of translated texts, which, though admittedly derivative, now came to be seen as texts in their own right. With Benjamin's revival of Schleiermacher's notion of foreignizing translation, in these first decades of the last century, the pendulum swings toward 'word-for-word' translation (Venuti, *TSR* 73). By the end of the 1930s, Venuti claims, translation was seen as a distinctive linguistic practice, and it attracted a good deal of scholarly attention (*TSR* 74).

The mid-twentieth century was dominated by the issue of translatability (Venuti, *TSR* 111), and opinions on whether translation can reconcile differences between languages and cultures ranged from scepticism to optimism. Important thinkers of this period – Nabokov, Martin Heidegger – favoured foreignizing translation strategies, in the strain of Schleiermacher (*TSR* 111). This period also, however, saw the application of linguistic analysis to problems of translation, and this area of research was at the optimistic end of the range. Describing successful linguistic solutions to translation problems naturally led to a belief in the essential translatability of texts. Eugene Nida, one of the most influential translation scholars of the twentieth century, recognized that certain literary meanings are necessarily lost in translation, but was happy "to sacrifice certain formal niceties for the sake of the content" (*Theory* 5); he argued translations need to be understood in the receiving culture and that, thus, target language norms have priority over those of the source language. Roman Jakobson made the significant contribution of introducing a semiotic reflection on translatability; he questioned empiricist semantics which viewed meaning as referential of reality – he, on the other hand, saw meaning as a relation between signs (Venuti, *TSR* 113). Attitudes toward the concept of meaning, 'where' it lies and how extractable it is, play a significant role in the notion of equivalence between source text and target text.

Venuti sees equivalence as the controlling concept in translation theory during the 1960s and 70s (*TSR* 147). As mentioned above, an abundant amount of terminology arose in this period, mostly rephrasing the traditional opposition between pragmatic translation and formal equivalence. Following a time of intense preoccupation with linguistics in translation method and theory, another approach which would prove influential took shape. James S. Holmes, one of the leading scholars in this area, describes this new approach in his introduction to the compilation of papers from the important 1976 colloquium on this topic, as "an approach to literary problems in which 'formalism' has been replaced by 'functionalism'" (vi); further, this approach "is predominantly pragmatic" and has as one of its central topics "the communicative function of the text" (vi). An influential concept that arose in this context is that of 'shifts,' traceable changes that occur in the process of translating, for a variety of reasons, and which may be shown to have a more profound and generalized influence. The concept has been discussed at length by Anton Popovič, who defines it as: "all that appears as new with respect to the original, or fails to appear where it might have been expected, may be interpreted as a shift" (79). (It is also discussed by Jiří Levy, and Shoshana Blum-Kulka.) Shifts are typically used in elaborating a pragmatic, functional approach to translation; they are useful for a systematic approach, an "objective classification of differences between the translation and its original" (Popovič 84). Functionalism, generally, leads to increased attention being paid to the receptor and the target culture. The emergence of descriptive translation studies is a major advance here, in that it looks at actual translation practices and attempts to describe them rather than evaluate them. Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury are the most significant figures in this area of research; they look at translations as facts of the target system, and view literary systems as polysystems which generate norms that constrain the translator. Toury in particular is concerned with defining the norms that are active in the target system at a particular moment in time. Their work strongly influenced another generation of scholars, most strongly perhaps André Lefevere, until his premature death in 1996. Basnett observes that Lefevere "pioneered a great deal of work" (xvi) in the area of systems theory, and Venuti notes that he took up "the seminal work of Even-Zohar and Toury and redefine[d] their concepts of literary system and norm" (*TSR* 223).

In the 1980s we see translation studies emerge with more confidence as a separate discipline. Susan Bassnett (whose work *Translation Studies* first published in 1980 contributed to the newly independent status of the field) speaks of the flourishing of the field of Translation Studies in the 1980s – books published, journals founded, abundance of research (xi). Poststructuralist trends, on the other hand, return to the theme of untranslatability, with their view of language as inherently indeterminate and unstable (*Venuti,* TSR 224). Ethics comes more to the fore as an issue in translation; there is an increased awareness of ideological interests, and social and political hierarchies that can be reinforced and served by translations of foreign texts (*Venuti*, TSR 225).

In the 1990s we see the establishment of the institutional authority of translation studies, with a proliferation of training programs, scholarly publications, as well as of theoretical approaches (Basnett 6). Cultural studies bring "a concern with the social effects of translation and their ethical and political consequences" (Venuti, *TSR* 325). Culturally oriented research is influenced by poststructuralism, and is concerned with ethnocentrism, hidden ideological functions, and power relations in translating. It is pursued by such scholars as Gayatri Spivak, Anthony Appiah, Jacques Derrida, and Lawrence Venuti. Although this approach questions the objectivity of empirically and linguistically oriented research, linguistic and pragmatic approaches remain current. There are several studies published in the latter area: by Basil Hatim and Ian Mason

(1996), Mona Baker (1992), Neubert and Shreve (1992), among others. The coexistence of these approaches – pragmatically oriented, culturally oriented, polysystem theory oriented – as well as the independence and institutional authority of the discipline of translation studies bring us right up to the present moment in the history and development of translation thought.

Ideology of translation

After considering the history and development of thought on translation, it becomes clear that the position a contemporary translator assumes toward his source text will be a reflection of (or possibly reaction against) contemporary translation practices and norms. Thus my own approach is at least partly conditioned by the historical moment of this translation and by the translation norms currently dominant in the west. Speaking broadly, for example, it is currently a common norm that a translator should not significantly change the basic elements of the source text, such as its narrative structure, plot, information content, etc. Additions and deletions are not as acceptable as they were in another historical moment. Motte, for example, felt justified in reducing twenty four books to twelve in his 'poetic' translation of the *Iliad* (published 1714). A translator today would have a heavy burden to justify such alterations, as would I in introducing this thesis had I felt inclined to change Gallant's stories in an extreme way. As it is, I have attempted to alter as little as possible, but enough to preserve certain aspects of the text that I deemed important. Hatim speaks of the ideology of translation: "translation itself can be ideological....there is *something* about how translations are made, or how they sound, which shows allegiance to a particular method of translation"

(128). Thus even this particular translation is necessarily ideological, as much as it may seem unremarkable in its method and appearance; its approach falls within a range of acceptability for current literary translation practices. Other critics agree on this point: Maria Tymoczko, for example, observes that "all translations, even the most literal-seeming, have a critical bias" (77), while Lefevere notes that in reality, all translations "will tend to be more or less descriptive or more or less interpretive, simply because nobody is ever able to escape from the ideology and/or the poetics prevalent in the literary system of his or her own time" ("Why Waste" 239).

Selecting stories for translation

The stories translated for this thesis are meant to represent a large span of Gallant's writing career and present key features of her opus. Thus the chosen stories range from early ("The Other Paris," 1953) to mature work ("A State of Affairs," 1991), and also represent the settings of Gallant's oeuvre. As shown above, throughout her career Gallant has continued to write stories set most often in Paris, Montreal, Germany and the French Riviera. The stories selected here include two of her most prevalent settings, Montreal and Paris. The entire project is intended to afford a small flavour of this writer's fictional world, the particular variety of her subject matter, and the settings characteristic of her work.

Choosing a representational sample of stories from a writer's opus based in part on their setting would not be an effective selection principle were it not for the particular importance of setting in Gallant's work. Setting is a not merely a background against which some specific drama plays out, but rather a pervasive, detailed, and integrated element of the story. The Paris of 'The Other Paris' *is* the post-war Paris, Paris as it was in the early 1950s, and the fact that it is this Paris rather than some other, vague or non-descript Paris, plays a vital part of the narrative. Gallant has noted that this is not Paris today, but that it was such then: "it 'would be simply mystifying to a young foreigner today, but that *was* the city five years after the last war'" (Gallant qtd. in Weaver 12). The reality of the war is everywhere in the story: it plays into Carol's relationship with Odile, Odile's with Felix, Carol's own with Felix; it is integral to the central conflict of the protagonist, Carol – her conflict with the imagined Paris and the real Paris, and her conflict between the meanings of love and marriage, as she had conceived of them and as opposed to their new meanings, which she is on the brink of discovering. Similarly, the Montreal described in the four stories that make up the so-called Carette sisters sequence is the historical Montreal as it existed and evolved from the 1930s (the decade of the first story in the sequence, "1933") through to the 1980s (the decade of the series' last story, "Florida"). Choosing from a number of Montreal stories was difficult; "From Cloud to Cloud" fit this project for several reasons: it is part of the Carette sisters series, which is one of the better known portions of Gallant's work; I also wanted a story written in the 1980s (the collection it appeared from was published in 1991), when Mavis Gallant's reputation had finally come out of the shadows of Canadian literature.

Finally, I cannot claim that the stories selected here are the undisputed 'best' of Mavis Gallant, nor that they are 'the best' choices in regard to the principle of representation; clearly, any number of four stories could have been chosen and might have presented an equally representational sample. Above the outlined principles, such pragmatic considerations as length were also decisive, as was, finally, my own personal taste. That said, I maintain that the sample is indicative of her work throughout the decades of her career, and that the selections are quintessentially 'Gallant' in their setting, subject matter, narrative perspective and other matters of voice and style.

Translating Mavis Gallant, issues and challenges

The challenge of translating Gallant's stories was eased by her use of, as mentioned above, relatively standard English, as well as by the absence of dialects and particular jargons, and by the contemporaneousness of her fictions. Her stories reveal her fine sense of subtle speech and linguistic differences and their contexts; like the narrator of the Linnet Muir stories, who is close to – although not identical with – Gallant herself, she can precisely define a community's way of speaking, say, a particular area of 1950s Montreal: "I could hear just out of someone's saying to me, "Say, Linnet, couja just gimme a hand here, please?" born here, born in Glasgow; immigrated early, late; raised in Montreal, no, farther west" (*Home* 275). But luckily for the translator, this fine sense for language does not exhibit itself in the form of complicated attempts at phonetically rendering dialects and sociolects. The Parisian Odile and the American Carol Frazier in "The Other Paris" both speak an ordinary, everyday English in the direct dialogues of the story. (However, we are told that Odile, "because her English was at once precise and inaccurate, often sounded sarcastic" (7) and that Carol spoke "an earnest college French" (5). Similarly in 'From Cloud to Cloud,' the narrator explains that Raymond's English "belonged to a subdivision of Catholic Montreal – a bit Irish-sounding, but thinner than any tone you might hear in

Dublin" (41); and in this story too, the reported direct speech of the sisters, as well as Louis and Raymond, belongs to 'ordinary' English.)

It is a matter of importance for the translation to preserve this colloquial register, and differences in register when they occur; it is a primary consideration when searching for the 'right' word. Lexical decisions are also, of course, influenced by considerations of context. An equivalent word, ideally, is that which carries not only the same surface meaning, but similar latent or co-existing meanings and associations (if these are present). Word choice can be made more complicated due to the different worlds of reference between the source and target contexts; a word can be culturally specific and not quite match up with a seemingly identical word in another language, since it reflects particular habits and customs. A simple word like the English 'lunch' cannot be matched exactly in Croatian because of differences in customs regarding meals between the two cultures. In English lunch is a midday meal, an increasingly informal one, often taken during a work or school break. The Croatian 'ručak,' closest in meaning, is also a midday meal, but typically not one eaten at work or during a break, but a full meal with several courses. In "The Other Paris" 'lunch' comes up often in describing the working lunches taken by the characters; Carol lunches with her co-worker Odile and with her fiancée Howard, and the nature of these lunch scenes is important for characterizing the relationships between the characters. The work lunches depicted in "The Other Paris" are then bound to seem a little strange to target readers who are not used to 'ručak' being taken at work. Since there is no better word the readers are left to infer the different customs of the source context (a French context, but in regards to meals apparently unproblematic for the American characters of the story). Continuing, a target language word may lack the associative semantic richness of the original language word, or, on the other hand, a word that is fitting on one level may contain other, intrusive or undesirable meanings and overtones. In "From Cloud to Cloud," for example, the word 'affairs' is used in describing Marie's apparent belief that the walk on the moon in the summer of 1969 had also "exerted a tidal influence on her affairs" (39). 'Affairs' in this context refers to Marie's private life, primarily the death of her husband, and (as the reader learns later in the story) her son Raymond's sudden abandonment of the family to join the U.S. Marines. Croatian does not have a fully parallel expression – 'afere' would be fitting in as far as it siginifies 'goings-on' or 'events,' but it carries negative connotations that are not present in the English 'affairs.' For lack of a better option, the translation employs the rather less elegant construction 'events in her life:' "da je izvršilo valni utjecaj na događaje u njenom životu." Occasionally, there is simply no one word that will do, and this loss is attendant in literary translation.

Another important consideration for a translator of Gallant's fictions lies in matching her tone (wry, often detached), the narrator's attitude to the material (typically neutral), the oscillations between omniscience, limited omniscience, authoritativeness and mere hypothesis, and finally in allowing the subjective perspectives of the characters to emerge as they do in the original. It is this particular nature of handling the material of the story that significantly characterizes Gallant's fiction. Preserving character referents found in the source text is one way that the narratorial attitude is rendered in the translation; use of familial referents (father, sister) instead of first names, often found in "From Cloud to Cloud," the use of formal titles in "A State of

Affairs," and the references to 'first wife' and 'current wife' in "In Transit," all suggest a particular perspective. They were all conscientiously preserved in translation, and never substituted for a different referent. Just as important to carry over into the translated text is Mavis Gallant's ever-present irony. One way she achieves irony is through the use of contrasts; the most obvious level of irony in 'The Other Paris' is thus the discrepancy between Carol's expectations and the reality she faces. When she imagines an elegant evening that will be her entry into Paris high society, she is faced instead with a shabby theatre, bad sound, falling plaster, and an aristocratic family that neither looks like one, nor cares to befriend Carol. Another way irony emerges is through scenes that recall earlier scenes but now with something about them dramatically changed, as we will see in the discussion of the translation of "The Other Paris" (it is also evident in "In Transit" and "A State of Affairs"). References to setting carry over fairly smoothly into another language, but their function and significance may be altered or even changed dramatically when interpreted by another audience. Reading about the Montreal of 1969 will activate different associations for Gallant's English readers than for the readers of the Croatian translation, for most of whom Montreal is distant and relatively unknown.

Linguistic and other reoccurring problems in translation

Problem of word-order

Qualms about word order are likely to be encountered by any translator of English text into Croatian, due in part to differences in the principles that govern word-order in this set of languages. English word order is rule-governed, while Croatian, though not quite 'free', as is commonly generalized, is not always governed by the grammatical relations that give word order in English its constancy. Croatian word order is thus said to be relatively free, because it is governed by goals of communication (leaning toward familiarizing the receiver with the unfamiliar) and stress (Sibinović 79). Gallant's stance tends to be objective and apparently neutral narrating; the narrator is typically unintrusive and distanced; sometimes this distance allows the subjective perceptions of characters to enter the narrative, but even such oscillations of perspective (described above) remain relatively unaffected. I worked under the premise that Gallant's sentences are typically standard and unmarked for word order due to this neutrality of perspective. As such, I thought the best way of translating them was, generally, to adhere to an unmarked word order in Croatian, one that is used for merely getting information across (informative) and is not coloured or emphasized for emotion (and if it is marked, this is taken into consideration). Often this word order coincided with that of the original. In other cases, there might have been some rearrangements. Croatian word order sometimes conforms to the so-called 'theme-rheme' structure rather than to syntactic relations (Browne 77). Within this structure, "the theme (element which the sentence has in common with the previous context)" typically "comes first, serving as a bridge linking the sentence with what precedes, and the rheme (the information which the sentence gives about the theme) follows after the theme" (Browne, "Theme-rheme" 77). In translating "From Cloud to Cloud," the second clause of the sentence "Raymond sat cross-legged on the grass and practiced flipping a vegetable knife; his mother had found and disposed of his commando dagger" (39) was rearranged. 'Commando dagger' is moved to the beginning of the second clause:

"Raymond je sjedio na travi prekriženih nogu i vježbao prevrtanje u zraku noža za povrće; komando bodež mu je mama bila pronašla i uklonila." The move makes the sentence follow a natural flow, since 'komando bodež' is the element most closely related to the first part of the sentence, "the point of departure for the message" (Browne and Nakić 75). The most important part of the rheme is the fact that the dagger had been removed, and thus 'removed' ('uklonila') ends the sentence.

The problem of passive constructions

Sibinović cites four kinds of translation shifts ("prevodilačke transformacije" (80)): rearrangement, replacement/switch, addition, and deletion. He notes that shifts can be, but are not necessarily, the result of differences in the nature of the two languages (80, translation mine). On the syntactical level, the difference in the use of passive constructions between languages is common, and we find such a difference between English and Croatian languages as well. Sibinović writes, "poznato je da srpskohrvatski jezik, recimo, za razliku od nemačkog, ruskog, engleskog i francuskog, ne trpi čestu upotrebu pasivnih rečenica" (80) ("it is known that Serbo-Croatian, for example, unlike German, Russian, English and French, cannot bear the frequent use of passive sentences" (translation mine, 80)). As a result, passive sentences in the original were, when necessary, rendered active in the translation. In "A State of Affairs," the sentence "If you sit at the front row of tables you may be pestered by foreign beggars, some of them children" (140) was translated as "Ako sjednete za stol u prednjem redu, moguće je da će vas gnjaviti prosjaci, stranci, neki od njih djeca," 'beggars' ('prosjaci') becoming the subject of the sentence. Rendering the sentence in the passive: 'biti ćete gnjavnjeni od strane prosjaka,' would be exceedingly awkward and an unusual, unliterary usage.

Personal and possessive pronouns

Deletion that is a result of language differences occurs in translation from English to Croatian in regard to personal and possessive pronouns. In Croatian these can typically be left out without negative consequences for clarity or meaning, while English requires them much more often. Sibinović uses the example of their addition when translating from Croatian into languages like German or English (80): "Addition, then, can be the result of difference in the nature of two languages. For example…the addition of pronouns (personal or possessive) when Serbocroatian sentences in which possessive pronouns are left out without negative consequences for the precision of expressing meaning – are translated into German, Russian or English" (Sibinović 80, translation mine). If we reverse this movement, we illustrate the shift of deletion that occurs in this particular translation, and is, in this case, guided by differences between the original and the target language. So, from "perhaps he did it only to madden his wife" ("In Transit" 153), we get "možda je to činio samo da bi izluđivao ženu," in which the personal pronoun 'he' is implied (in the verb 'činio,' marked for third-person singular masculine), and the possessive pronoun 'his' is dropped. The possessive expressed by the pronoun 'his' in the sentences: "His hat and stick are on a chair" ("A State of Affairs" 139) and "I have seen his face, which is lean and elegant" ("A State of Affairs" 140), is rendered in Croatian by the use of the dative case; the possessive pronoun is dropped: "Štap i šešir su mu na stolici" and "vidio sam mu lice, tanko je i elegantno." "He looked pale and ill, and the sleeves of his coat were short, as if he were still growing" ("The Other Paris" 9) in Croatian becomes "Izgledao je blijedo i bolesno, a rukavi od kaputa su mu bili kratki, kao da još raste:" twice repeated pronoun 'he' becomes unnecessary, 'his' is rendered in the dative, and the connector 'and' is replaced by one of its variants in Croatian, 'a.'

Pronominalization

In discussing translation shifts in cohesion and coherence, Shoshana Blum-Kulka defines cohesion as "an overt relationship holding between parts of the text, expressed by language specific markers" (291). She argues that shifts in cohesion affect translations in one or both of the following ways: they create shifts in the level of explicitness, as well as shifts in text meaning. She acknowledges that shifts in level of explicitness have been "linked to differences in stylistic preferences for types of cohesive markers in the two languages involved in translation" (292), but she argues that these shifts are more likely "constraints imposed by the translation process itself" (292). The latter 'explicitation hypothesis' seems likely, based on what many theorists have observed of translated works. Nonetheless, there seems to be a difference between Croatian and English in their use of lexical cohesion. Levenston (1976) and Berman (1978) contrasted English and Hebrew and found that Hebrew writers more often choose lexical repetition, and that in Hebrew the choice of pronominalization is often not grammatically possible, and so it employs lexical repetition more often than English (Blum-Kulka 293).

Gallant's predilection for "anaphoric pronominal reference" (L. Grant 40), a pronoun reference to a preceding expression (as opposed to a cataphoric reference, to a following expression), is observed by Lois Grant as contributing to Gallant's "neutral reportorial style" (40). In translation, lexical repetition sometimes had to be inserted where the original had used a pronominal reference. This was necessary mostly for reasons of clarity, for the sake of avoiding a hanging referent and an impression of vagueness or sloppy imprecision. These reasons went beyond, I believe, the translator's general impulse to clarify; without the clarification, confusion would be generated where there was none in the original and where it certainly served no purpose. For example, in "The Other Paris," Carol's reaction to seeing Felix in the audience at the concert is described as follows: "She felt a spasm of annoyance, and at the same time her heart began to beat so quickly that she felt its movement must surely be visible" (16). The next paragraph continues: "What ever is the matter with me, she thought. If one could believe all the arch stories on the subject, this was traditional for brides-to-be" (16). The translation of the latter sentence reads, "Ako su sve proto-priče na tu temu bile za vjerovati, ovako nešto je spadalo u tradiciju za buduće nevjeste;" original 'this' is replaced by the explicating 'something like this.' Without this explication the reader would be unnecessarily disoriented, and what is worse, might get the impression that the writer has not bothered to express her point clearly. In "The State of Affairs" we get another example: "A Mme. Carol Fournier, of Customers' Counselling Service, entreated him to sign the certificate, ask for an appointment, and bring it to her desk" (149). The translation reads: "Mme. Carole Fournier, iz Službe za savjetovanje korisnika, ga je molila da potvrdu potpiše, zatraži sastanak i donese ju u njen ured."

The pronoun reference 'ju' sounds in Croatian not entirely unclear, but slightly ambiguous; it is not as immediately clear as it is in the English original that it refers to the certificate, though it becomes clear on going back a step (thus the translation also uses a pronoun to avoid repetition of 'potvrda'). The situation could have been a little more complex if the word 'sastanak' ('appointment'), which is masculine in Croatian, happened to be of the same gender as 'potvrda' ('certificate') which is feminine. If this were the case, the reference 'ju' which is marked for case and gender would be read as referring to the nearest expression, 'appointment,' rendering such a translation confusing. The example illustrates problems that arise because of differences between language systems, and shows why straightforward and 'literal' translating cannot be effective in practice. Of course many such problems are easily remedied, in this case by a simple reordering of the sentence.

Shift in conjuction use

Most of the text-linguistic markers of Gallant's style carry over well in translation. One such marker is observed by Lois Grant: "the most noticeable characteristic of Gallant' neutral syntactic style is the use of coordination with 'and' at all levels of constituent structure" (40). She further notes that "As the default conjunction, 'and' has no power to indicate relationships other than simultaneity and succession between syntactic constituents" (40) and as such shows "least evidence of narratorial intrusion" (127). Besner cites as one of Gallant's 'recurring structures,' "the insistent and ironic series of 'ands' linking lists which mean both less and more than the sum of their parts; the most powerful example to date of this structure forms the ending of 'The Other Paris'" (*Light* 151). Unlike English (and unlike most Germanic and Romance languages) Slavic languages typically have several variants of the co-ordinator 'and' (Gvozdanović 101). Western South Slavic languages have the greatest variations of this co-ordinator (Gvozdanović 101); Croatian has four possible correlates for the English 'and,' namely: *i*, *a*, *pa*, *te*. Each one carries its particular shades of meaning and function. 'I' is closest to English 'and' as it is most neutral and used to indicate 'simultaneity and succession'. *I*, *pa*, *te* have been classified as copulative coordinators, and *a* as "an adversative coordinator which sometimes has a copulative meaning" (Stevanović, 1974: 803, in Gvozdanović 101). The co-ordinators *pa* and *te* express "a causal relationship between coordinated sentences, which may be adversative in the sense of counter-expectedness" (Stevanović, 1974: 785, in Gvozdanović 101) and for both of them "a temporal sequential relationship may follow naturally from the causal one" (Stevanović, 1973: 789, in Gvozdanović 102). In my translations of Gallant I was aware of the stylistic function of her 'and' co-ordination. While such a use, in the original, is marked and has an important 'textural' effect, it is also subtle, and not awkward or marked to the point of jarring. In Croatian, however, using *i* uniformly would be both awkward and marked, aside from the unusual flattening effect it would also have on the text. So it is a better option to use a variety of the coordinates available in Croatian. The second sentence of "A State of Affairs" reads "Most of the friends of his youth in Warsaw are dead and the survivors have not much to say" (138); the translation uses the variant 'a' for the 'and' in the original: "Većina njegovih prijatelja iz mladosti u Varšavi su umrli, a preživjeli nemaju puno za ispričati." The adversative/copulative coordinator 'a' is necessary because of the juxtaposition dead/surviving, preparing the reader for a change in subject from the first part of the sentence. The flatness and impression of bad usage that would result from a uniform use of *i* extends beyond the narrative neutrality effected by Gallant, into an awkwardness that would undermine the stylistic confidence of the original.

This particular problem is another apt reminder why literal or word-for-word translating does not work, and more importantly perhaps, why it is hardly ever encountered in actuality. Almost all translating requires a variety of considerations – in this case it was a difference in accepted conjuction use between two linguistic systems that had to be taken into account. A fairly straightforward linguistic consideration, but nonetheless a dynamic one, concerned with discrepancy of effect. Such examples lead to the conclusion that the traditional polarization between literal and free, or formal and dynamic translating, is over-extended, and that most literary translating is of necessity dynamic, informed by a variety of considerations, linguistic and otherwise. Maria Tymoczko observes that the distinctions between formal and dynamic equivalence are 'neither very great nor very useful' (79). While formal-equivalence translations traditionally claim to be essentially logical and objective, they also need to rely on dynamic decision about the work as a whole, the literary context, etc., to make "formal and logical sense of a sentence" (77). While distinctions can certainly be made between excessively free translations and those guided more closely by the source text, the real question is then that of degree rather than of polarization.

Translating personal titles

In most of her stories that refer to French characters, Gallant keeps French titles – Monsieur, Mme. and Mlle – rather than inserting English ones. I have opted to follow this practice, to preserve an equivalence – since the titles are foreign words in the language of the original, they should remain foreign in the language of the target text as well. English titles which are used to designate, for example, the American characters in 'The Other Paris,' have been translated into their corresponding Croatian equivalents; the logic followed is that since they belong to the same language as the rest of the text in the original, in the target text they should also be in the language of the rest of the text. This is not a perfect equivalence – in the original, the titles also belong to the culture of the character that they are designating (so, the French seamstress in "The Other Paris" is Madame Germaine, while Carol's American fiancée is Mister Mitchell), while in the target text this is obviously not the case.

Sibinović observes correctly that "[l]inguistically faithful translating often does not guarantee a fitting artistic effect of the translation, which means also that a linguistically-based theory cannot encompass all important components of a literary translation" (82, translation mine). With this in mind then, we move toward other, less regulated and more idiosyncratic, problems.

Other problems: translating Mavis Gallant in the context of Lefevere's four levels of translation

Lefevere identifies four levels of translation: ideology, poetics, universe of discourse, and language. This order also shows his hierarchy, in descending order, of the importance of each level (*Translating* 86-7). He asserts that problems of ideology and poetics have to be solved before the problem of language can be tackled, and that, in fact, the 'solutions' to those higher-up problems will dictate the solutions at the level of the lower problems. Lefevere's system is a useful one for the translator; it compartmentalizes problems, and promotes self-consciousness of one's translation process, and of the motivations for particular choices and decisions. (Lefevere himself believes that, generally speaking, translations should be adapted to the target culture: translators "have to attach greater importance to the poetological and ideological expectations of the target audience than to the [same] considerations that influenced the production of the source text. When in doubt, translators are well advised to tilt to the target audience and its expectations, not to the source text" (*Translating* 19). This is not, necessarily, the view of this translator.)

Lefevere's cites practical reasons for a translator's ideological alterations: it is easier to publish a work if it does not contradict the ideology of the receiving culture (*Translating* 87); he writes: "If the source text clashes with the ideology of the target culture, translators may have to adapt the text so that the offending passages are either severely modified or left out altogether" (*Translating* 87). Texts often remain untranslated due to ideological considerations; certain works from a writer's opus may remain untranslated while others are repeatedly translated – those untranslated might have been judged too offensive, politically or culturally, or perhaps inadequate, and are perhaps rejected for fear of tarnishing an otherwise well-accepted author's reputation. Lefevere notes that Catullus' poem 32 has often been omitted from translations of his poetry because it was too erotically overt for the tastes of the translator's culture; if included, it was translated in such a way that the erotic element was neutralized – romanticized, most typically (Lefevere, *Translating* 88). Similarly, a number of works by authors from Eastern Europe became translated and known in the West on the basis of their anti-communist leanings, and many such dissident writers enjoyed even a great deal of acclaim in the West. It is clear why the Western literary establishment would embrace such voices in the years of the Cold War, for example.

As far as Gallant's fiction is concerned, there is no particular ideological clash between it and the target culture. Her fiction, on the whole, is historically and politically informed; WWII is a dominant, if not always overt, presence in her work, and attendant to it is her interest in the manifestations of fascism. Also present are tensions between English and French Canada, the fall of communism, the Vietnam war, the Algerian war, Franco's rule in Spain. Several of these topics are also present in the selection of stories that form this thesis. The Second World War has been widely represented in Croatian fiction, but primarily fiction of an earlier period. In the last twenty years interest in such fiction has been eclipsed by other concerns. This is nonetheless a minor ideological concern.

As regards poetics, Lefevere writes that "[s]ometimes a genre cannot easily be transplanted into another literature or another culture" (*Translating* 88) and that "poetics tends to be the level where the effective translatability or untranslatability of the source text is decided" (*Translating* 129). Gallant's chosen genre, the short story, is a genre with a relatively long and recognized tradition in both the originating and the target cultures. It is also a genre that is currently enjoying much popularity in the receiving culture, and is widespread in both domestic literary production and among works in translation. The domestic short story is marked often by surrealism, magic realism, disjointedness, indeterminacy, and some other, typically postmodern characteristics. The precision of detail and near-documentary evocation of historical setting found in the majority of Gallant's stories and characteristic of Gallant's poetics is rarely found among domestic writers of the short story. This aspect was considered at further length above.

Universe of discourse concerns the area of reference encompassed by a literary work. Lefevere writes that "translators may be faced with things, customs, and concepts that were immediately intelligible to the readers of the original but are no longer intelligible to prospective readers of the translation" (*Translating* 88). As already observed, Gallant's world of reference is usually historically and geographically situated. These contexts will most often be somewhat unfamiliar to target readers, and some relatively minor problems are encountered by the translator in this area. Finally, at the level of language we will find all those problematic issues so often mentioned in discussing translation; we are concerned with literary translation here, as is Lefevere, who discusses "problems that arise during the translation process on the 'illocutionary' level" (*Translating* 17). Word order, grammar, syntax, rhyme, alliteration, repetition, puns, dialect, idiolect, register, tone, allusion, metaphor, neologism, archaism, irony, parody, all belong (though not exclusively) at the level of language and often budge only with difficulty from the linguistic system of their original creation. At this level, the other levels are 'distilled,' or betrayed: an allusion adequately renderable in a target language that has nonetheless been dropped likely signals interference from the level of ideology or poetics. A metaphor may lose its effect if it depends on a reference unknown to the target reader, just as parody depends on certain familiarity with a universe of discourse to be understood as parody. Gallant's language is precise and economical; it varies slightly in register from colloquialism to formality. There are few allusions and archaisms, and no dialects or puns. Important features of her language are rhythm, tone, irony, registers, repetition of words and syntax; all are, generally, translatable.

Translating 'The Other Paris'

This is one of Gallant's best known early stories, and perhaps one of the best known of her entire oeuvre. Written in 1953, it already exhibits the proficiency, and the particular thematic and stylistic features, that would become Gallant's hallmarks. The historically accurate and textually relevant setting, the concern with history, with WWII and its effects, the focus on characters who are displaced, the particular brand of third-person narrator, the play with contrasts, and the wit and irony, all of these features observed in 'The Other Paris' are to recur in Gallant's fiction throughout her career.

Carol Frazier, a twenty-one year old American working in Paris, goes through an education of sorts, but she fails to heed what it teaches her. The story explores the gaping contrast between Carol's imagined and romanticized Paris, which she desperately wants to uncover, and the real, rather drab and poor post-war Paris, during a particularly rainy winter. Carol's mindset is meant to represent a particular type of mindset and attitude toward Paris (France, Europe) common among Americans after the war. There is an added contradiction in the fact that Carol, paradoxically, is searching and yearning for both an ideal (the Paris she had read about, the romantic setting, the happy, elegant people) and a kind of authenticity (real love, the real life of Paris, which might be found in odd restaurants she 'hunts down' or in the company of French friends). Carol is both drawn to and repulsed by her experiences in Paris, particularly in regards to the refugee Felix and the love affair of Felix and Carol's co-worker Odile; her feelings oscillate, sometimes wildly, until the very conclusion of the story. She feels a tie with Felix due to their closeness in age (10), her heart races when she sees him (16), and she worries about his hardships on several occassions, but when he refers to Carol and himself in the same category of 'us foreigners' (19), she is shocked and offended. In the conclusion of the story, following Carol's final oscillation, away from Felix and Odile and "all their distasteful strangeness" (30), Carol gains comfort from retreating into her imaginary vision of Paris, such as she foresees it remaining in her memory once she is married to Howard and living again in the United States. Other contrasts between illusion and reality are exploited, often ironically, throughout the story (Carol's college lectures about marriage with their very practical advice about how love and marriage work, which are shown to be entirely useless in reality). The story has a documentary quality due to the precisely evoked setting and the tone of the narrating voice, which is modified by the voices of Carol and her fiancée Howard. Neil Besner sees in this story, as in other Gallant stories, the exploration of the relations of "history and fiction, memory and imagination" ("Broken Dialogue" 89); he also argues that the so-called documentary realism of the stories "poses the prospect of meticulously realized settings against characters' 'memorials,' or inventions of setting" ("Broken Dialogue 93).

In translating this story I strove to preserve the tone of the narrator; the documentary qualities and the details that make for the 'meticulously realized setting;'

and the ironic contrasts. The romantic and clichéd scene that Carol imagines when she thinks of Howard's proposal to her is drastically different from the actual proposal. Much later in the story, elements of that imagined, fabricated scene are recalled in a rather different context – in the "down-and-out" (22) neighbourhood in which Felix lives and to which Odile drags an unwilling Carol. This is an example of Besner's "scenes set over against each other" (*Light* 151). In the first scene Carol imagines "the Seine, moonlight, barrows of violets, acacias in flower, and confused, misty background of Eiffel Tower and little crooked streets" (3). In getting to Felix's hotel room, Carol and Odile walk through "a few crooked, narrow streets filled with curbside barrows and marketing crowds" (22), but this time the scene is "not pretty, not picturesque" (22). Making the scene more unfavourable are the Arabs who openly stare at the girls and even call out to them (22); by showing Carol's fear of them, the narrator reminds us of her WASP mentality, which involves both xenophobia and a fear of sex, making the Arab men doubly threatening. The translation preserves the echo of one scene in the other by using parallel language: "tačke pune ljubičica, i zbrkana, maglovita pozadina sa Eiffelovim tornjem i krivudavim uličicama;" and, "Prešle su preko bulevara i nekoliko uskih, krivudavih uličica koje su bile pune tržničkih gomila i tački uz stazu."

Howard's actual proposal to Carol takes place "at lunch, over a tuna-fish salad" (3). The irony lies, of course, in the fact that it takes place in mundane circumstances rather than the romantic ones Carol has imagined, over an ordinary working lunch and an ordinary meal rather than near the Seine, in moonlight. A tuna-fish salad is an ordinary American lunch, but in Croatia it is unusual and even exotic. The meal belongs to a North American universe of discourse, a world of reference foreign to target readers. This is a problem with the transfer, from one culture to another, of the ordinary, a problem that "arises when an environment that is commonplace in one culture becomes exotic in the other" (Rabassa, "If This Be Treason" 24), and is "apt to be another impossibility of translation" (Rabassa, "If This Be Treason" 25). I tried to negotiate the ordinary and the unusual by translating 'tuna-fish salad' as 'tuna-salata,' rather than the more likely in Croatian, 'salata od tunjevine' ('salad made of tuna'); the former is the form used for ordinary salads, such as 'krumpir-salata' ('potato salad'), while the latter form is more commonly used for unusual salads, such as 'salata od hobotnice' ('salad made of squid'). The reader is likely to pick up on the contrast between Carol's fantasy and the real proposal, even through the marker 'actually' that begins the description of the actual proposal, and which alone suggests contrast from something previously said.

Unlike English, Croatian differentiates between formal and personal forms of address, with a different pronoun signaling each. The intimate form of the second person singular pronoun is 'ti', while the formal or polite form is identical to the second person plural, 'vi.' This discrepancy (which exists between a number of languages) is known to create problems in translation, especially when ways in which the characters address each other signal particular kinds of relations between them (and can help define their individual personalities). If two characters address each other with the personal form of the pronoun, but change to the formal at a particular point in a story, this change is always relevant, and likely intended to be revealing. In translating such an occurrence into a language without the differentiation in address, the translator runs into the difficulty of compensating for the loss in meaning. Translating in the other direction, as is the case here, from a language such as English with one universal form of address, into one with the two different forms, means having to decide which pronoun in which instance most closely approximates the relationship depicted. The two ways of addressing are also tied in with particular cultural expectations; thus, speakers of Croatian will typically know, within their own cultural context, which situations require which pronoun. Outside of this context, one tries to make interpretive guesses as to which forms people in other cultures would use, if they had a similar system of address. So in the cultural context depicted in the "The Other Paris," the translator has to imagine how these English-speaking characters would be addressing each other if they had the intimate and formal forms at their disposal. How the 'you' is translated in conversations between Carol and Felix, primarily in their last conversation near the end of the story, is relevant for the understanding of their relationship. Carol's feelings toward Felix oscillate between an unwitting closeness and a kind of repulsion or resistance; it is clear that she is attracted to him, but also that a particular mindset makes her recoil from him and from the knowledge that might arise from knowing him. Carol's character has a strong sense of propriety, and a strong North American, WASP mentality – she is disturbed that Odile is in a relationship with the significantly younger Felix, and by the intimacy of their relationship, considering both immoral; and she cannot understand why Felix, a refugee, is poor and unemployed, since she believes 'that anyone can work who sincerely wants to' (24). Her sense of superiority to Felix is both cultural and personal – she is offended when she, an American, is grouped with Felix "in a single category of foreigners" (19) by Odile's family; she also considers herself (and Howard) morally superior to Felix and his questionable, 'shady' lifestyle.

Carol's insistence on propriety makes it unlikely that she would begin at the outset to address Felix with the intimate pronoun 'ti,' despite their youthful ages and their proximity in age. As the story progresses, Carol's feelings toward Felix grow conflicted, and in that last conversation between them there is a possibility of something personal, some intimacy or understanding developing. This understanding could, it is implied, dramatically change her outlook; but as it is, Carol comes to the brink of it and retreats, and her feelings of superiority prevail. Thus the formal pronoun 'vi' remains the only possible one for their interaction. Was the situation to take a different turn, there may be justification to switch at a particular moment to 'ti', but that is not the case here. The translation also keeps the pronoun 'vi' when it is Felix addressing Carol; it is not unlikely that he might address her in the familiar, given several gestures of familiarity he extends to Carol, and his apparent disregard for fine manners. Even so, he addresses Carol with 'Miss Frazier' and makes a half-hearted attempt at hospitality when she and Odile are in his room. To have him address her with 'ti' while she addresses him with 'vi' could easily seem too marked in the translation, since a large social gap is implied if two people address each other with different forms; the reader would likely interpret Felix's behaviour as overtly disrespectful, which it is not in the original.

For translating the title of the story, there were only two possibilities: 'Drugi Pariz' and 'Onaj drugi Pariz.' Croatian language does not employ articles; in translating into it from the English language, articles are typically dropped but occasionally need to be compensated for if they have semantic import. The title suggests a particular 'other Paris' not 'some other Paris' or just 'any other Paris.'

Adding ‘onaj’ (that) to the title attends to this particularity, that is, to the specificity of the constructed Paris built-up in Carol’s imagination (and, it is implied, in the imagination of her compatriots), which is of central importance to this work.

Translating ‘In Transit’

This story centres around a newly-married couple, Philippe Perrigny and his wife Claire. Two other couples figure prominently in the story – an older American couple, and Philippe Perrigny and his first wife Shirley. The story begins at the Helsinki airport, while Perrigny and his new wife, on their honeymoon, are waiting to depart, and goes back in time to the previous day they spent together. At the airport Philippe observes the older American couple, the only ones left in the waiting room; Philippe’s marriage to Shirley is discussed by Claire and him, and revisited in Philippe’s memory. This story, too, is told from a third-person narrative perspective. The narrator has insight into Philippe’s mind, as well as Claire’s, and, again characteristically of Gallant, exercises a restrained omniscience, modified by hypothesis and conjecture. For example, in regards to the older American couple, the narrator sometimes speaks authoritatively: “Whichever door they take, they will see the circular lanes of suburbs, and the family car outside each house, and in the back yard a blue pool” (154), and other times conjectures: “The man had the habit of reading signs out loud, though perhaps he did it only to madden his wife” (153). We view this couple primarily through the eyes of Philippe, and it is an example of the narrator’s neutrality that Philippe’s interpretation of them stands uncontested (an interpretation that tells the reader as much about Philippe himself as about the American couple, perhaps): “The wild thoughts of the younger man were: They are chained for the rest of this life. Too old to change? Only a brute would leave her now?" (154).

The older couple and the younger couple, as well as Philippe's first marriage and his second marriage, are textually conflated (similar to the conflation between past and present that is found in "A State of Affairs"), and implicitly compared. Consider these beginnings of two consecutive paragraphs: "The old man took his wife's hand" (154), and "Perrigny's new wife gently withdrew her hand from his" (155). In all three relationships there is an instance of the husband 'distracting' his wife from something; it is important to translate 'distract' uniformly so that the connection (on the surface lexical, but also thematic) between the different instances can be preserved. So 'distract' was translated with one common Croatian expression, 'skrenuti pažnju.' The repetition of the expression in the original subtly encourages the reader to juxtapose and compare the situations and the different couples, and the translation matches this effect. The continued designation of Claire as 'his new wife,' and Shirley as 'his first wife' stresses their relationship to Philippe and their indirect relation to each other, and suggests a view of them as 'one of Philippe's wives' – in this way creating an impression of circularity and repetition. Again, this significance of referring terms needs to be attended to in translation and rendered accordingly; the translation refrained from substituting terms where it may have seemed more natural for other reasons. Images of circularity are in fact reinforced elsewhere in the story: all doors at the airport, though marked differently, lead to the same place; this imagined place is a uniform one, the elements of which are repetitious – circular lanes, cars in driveways, and pools in the backyard; street names all over Northern Europe are named after acacia trees. This naming of trees is a variation on a theme, which is a kind of motif in the story. The articles Philippe has written for his newspaper have been, for years, variations on the theme of 'the silent cry.' In this context we can read all of the three couples as variations on the theme of love, marriage, and the mutations of partnership with the passage of time. Besner argues that the

> most significant structural unity in Gallant's fiction is her stories' recurrent evocations of returns – returns via juxtaposed details, repeated phrases with opposed meanings, scenes set over against each other, characters' attitudes and situations reversed. These returns are structural figurations of Gallant's fundamental concern with time. They do not imply a cyclical repetition of history; rather, they imply subtle alteration, variations within each repetition, each return to a 'locked situation.' (*Light* 151)

In this story, then, there are several such returns to crucial moments: Claire's question to Philippe ("How do I know you won't leave me?" (156)) returns us to the crucial question asked by the older American woman of her husband at the beginning of the story ("What I wonder is what I have been to you all these years" (153)); Philippe returns in his mind to the honeymoon with his first wife, a parallel for his honeymoon with his current wife; the distractions that both husbands perform for their wives return to each other; the final moment in the story, in which Philippe observes Claire from a kind of temporal distance returns us to a moment earlier when Claire was desiring to both be the girl in the park whom Philippe was admiring and to 'stand off and see it too' (157).

The use of alliteration is known to be difficult to carry through in translation, at least if one aims to preserve the denotative and connotative meanings of the words in question. In a dialogue between Philippe and Claire, Philippe says of his first wife, "The mistake was that I married her. The mystery was why I ever married her" (156). The translation reads, "Greška je bila u tome što sam je oženio. Zagonetka je zašto sam je uopće oženio" (156). The alliteration is lost, but, the rhythmic parallel constructions are preserved; assonance in 'mistake' and 'mystery' is replaced by an off-rhyme in 'greška' and 'zagonetka,' contributing to the rhythm of the consecutive sentences. Schaub observes that the "parallel constructions [cited above]…with their alliterations, assonances, and ironic echo in…'mistake' and 'mystery,' confirm the clash between two worlds with different priorities – the old one favoring elegance, the new one encouraging comfort" (152).

The title is rendered in an acceptable though perhaps not ideal way. The word 'transit' in English signifies traveling, and passage, and is closely related to both the notion of transience and the notion of transition (all three words are from the Latin 'transire'). The Croatian word 'prolaz' is fairly close; it typically refers to 'passage' or 'passing' (between, through, across something, etc.) and is also close to 'prolaznost' (transience). But it does not refer to traveling except as far as it can be used to say 'passing through;' nor can it imply transition/change the way 'transit' does. A more obvious back-translation of 'u prolazu' would be 'in passing,' a more common and colloquial expression. The other possibility for rendering the title is 'na putu,' meaning 'on the way,' 'on the road,' 'traveling.' This expression refers more narrowly to traveling, or generally to being 'on the way' to a particular something, and cannot encompass connotations of transience and change. Since ‘na putu’ carries fewer relevant connotations, I chose ‘u prolazu’ as the better of two imperfect solutions.

Translating “From Cloud to Cloud”

This story is the third in the Carette sisters sequence, which follows the life of two Montreal sisters, Berthe and Marie, from their childhood in the 1930s to their ripe adulthood in the 1980s. ‘From Cloud to Cloud’ centres around the funeral of Marie’s husband Louis, and the sudden departure of her son Raymond, who leaves Montreal to enlist in the Marine Corps at the time of the Vietnam war. Like the other stories, this one too is abundant with irony, and told by Gallant’s hallmark narrator. Her elliptical and spare style does not tell more than is necessary: “His French vocabulary was drawn from conversations with his mother and aunt, and should have been full of tenderness” (41); we do not need to be told that it was not.

The occasional impossibility of translating a cultural reference with full equivalence is evidenced by the reference to a “second-story walkup” (40), in which the character of Berthe lives. The concept of the ‘walkup’ is context-specific, and no single word or expression exists in the Croatian language for what is an apartment building with no elevator, and usually few floors, or an apartment in such a building (“walk-up”). A possible choice in translation might be ‘Ona je živjela u stanu na drugom katu zgrade bez dizala,’ which corresponds to ‘She lived in an apartment on the second floor of a building with no elevator’ (longer and clunkier); another option is ‘Ona je živjela u stanu na drugom katu,’ which drops the ‘with no elevator,’ and so drops the whole 'walkup' concept. Either the concept is lost, or something of syntactical elegance is sacrificed. This translation chose to sacrifice the concept, but partly compensated for it by adding the adjective ‘little’ to describe the building.

In another instance, translation successfully preserved a subtle juxtaposition created by lexical repetition. Near the beginning of the story, we are told that “Louis couldn’t stand the sight of his son’s clothes” (40) (flashy rodeo outfits, mostly) and gave some of them away while he was dying. The morning after Louis’ funeral, Raymond leaves home without a word of warning, after which his mother and aunt “scarcely had the sight of his handwriting,” (42) a sight which, in contrast to Louis’ earlier repulsion, would be more than welcome in the new context of his bewildering abandonment. The translation uses a similarly accepted Croatian expression which preserves the connection between the two instances, so that the second instance recalls the first: ‘Louis očima nije mogao vidjeti sinovu odjeću,’ and ‘Nakon što je otišao od kuće, Berthe i Marie su jedva ikad imale njegov rukopis pred očima.’

References to Montreal and Montreal concerns are many, in keeping with Gallant’s attention to setting. Language issues, the boundaries and points of contact between English and French, are often taken up or mentioned. Berthe works in an office of English-Canadians (38); Louis wants his son Raymond to go to an English commercial school so that he “might meet people who would be useful to him” (40); Berthe, in a somewhat antagonistic relationship with her brother-in-law, makes a point of mentioning that she speaks better English than he (40); Marie orders a bilingual inscription for her husband’s gravestone, “because he had spoken English at the office and French to her” (41); Raymond speaks both languages but “with a crack in each”

(41), and eventually his French grows infiltrated by English (42). What becomes of these references in translation? The target audience is likely to have a relative knowledge of Canada's geography and linguistic make-up, though it is probably not familiar with the finer distinctions of language and region. However, the nature of the original writing is such that it was suited even to an audience with no first-hand knowledge of such matters. The story's first audience was an American one, the *New Yorker* audience, likely unfamiliar with subtleties of language use in French Canada; it is possible that Gallant chose to reveal these subtleties by telling about them rather than rendering them linguistically in the text, in order to remain accessible to her readers, without the risk of alienating them or losing their interest (Dimić, discussion). So, a reader with minimal knowledge will nonetheless quickly infer that there is a French-English tension, and that English is the 'preferred' language of the two. Individual footnotes in the translation would not be of particular help here; in the event of publication, an introduction that explains a part of Montreal's history could be utilized to clarify some points for the unfamiliar reader. But unfamiliarity of this sort will not prevent the reader from engaging meaningfully with the story.

Translating 'A State of Affairs'

The story centres around a M. Wroblewski, an aging Polish political refugee who has lived in Paris for half a century. His wife is no longer of a lucid mind and requires the help of an aid sent by the city's social services just to get out of bed and get dressed in the mornings. M. Wroblewski has received a letter from a friend in Poland, whom he has not seen for decades, and since the arrival of the letter he continues to address this friend in his thoughts. M. Wroblewski's life, it is suggested, is nearly all in the past, in his memory. He cherishes the possession of his faculties, though the reader (not M. Wroblewski) is made aware that these are not, after all, impeccable. M. Wroblewski's alienation takes place against the background of a changing Paris, and a changing Montparnasse that is still the site of his outings. Nostalgic for a time past, M. Wroblewski remains kind and optimistic in addressing his Warsaw friend, and polite and considerate toward all the people he encounters in the course of the story.

M. Wroblewski's alienation is textually paralleled by the depiction of the alienation and dehumanization of an individual within 'the system' – the state and institutional bureaucracy in which each individual is a digit in a game of numbers. The encounters with bureaucracy include lining up for a box of chocolates distributed by the mayor of Paris to senior citizens at Christmas-time; the government's recall of the Nansen passports, which were particularly precious to the Wroblewskis; and an enticing letter from the bank, followed by a disappointing meeting of M. Wroblewski with a bank official. Money, the measuring of human virtue or worth by monetary means, enters the subtext of alienation as another way that a human life is dehistoricized and decontextualized.

The narrator of the story is characteristically Gallantian – third-person, generally detached and neutral, often employing a reportorial tone, alternately authoritative and hypothesizing, with insight into Wroblewski's mind and an omniscience that is sometimes exercised and other times muted. The opening sentence of the story reads: "Owing to his advanced age and a lack of close relatives, M. Wroblewski receives little personal mail" (138). The official, documentary quality of using only the last name of the main character is established, as is the authority of the narrating voice, which easily states a fact about the character, and the reasons contributing to that fact. Within this narrative voice, a variety of other points of view are indirectly given voice, often through indirect reported speech – which is textually unmarked, but distinguishable by its style, tone, or diction as belonging to a voice other than the narrator's. It is essential to emulate in the translation this distinction between voices, since the multi-perspectival nature of the work in large part depends on it; this is achieved by observing the markers of each voice, its tone or 'character.' Most often this is Wroblewski's voice; the voice of his Warsaw friend, and the voice of the German lawyer are also distinct. Thus in the clipped, pessimistic statements: "Everything costs too much. Young people are ignorant and rude. The spoken language is debased," (138), we recognize the voice of M. Wroblewski's Polish 'correspondent;' a straight-forward translation can capture these voices. Wroblewski's own voice emerges in passages such as:

> Some people make a whole life out of trickery. They will even try to wrangle a box of the chocolates that the mayor of Paris distributes at Christmastime. These would-be swindlers may be in their fifties and sixties, too young to be put on the mayor's list....Actually, it is the rich who put on shabby clothes and saunter into their local town hall, waving a gift voucher that wouldn't fool a child. And they could buy a ton of chocolates without feeling the squeeze! (144).

The passage relates Wroblewski's thoughts, begun in the preceding paragraph (without saying outright 'he thought,' and without narratorial follow up that would interpret those thoughts for the readers). Choice of diction and register are important; expressions like 'wrangle,' 'trickery,' 'would-be swindlers,' 'saunter,' 'a ton of chocolates,' 'feeling the squeeze,' indicate a colloquial, even folksy way of speaking (and with it a particular, rather familiar, attitude). The translation needs to select expressions that evoke a similar register, tone and attitude:

> Neki ljudi si cijeli život izgrade na lopovluku. Čak će se pokušati dokopati bombonijere koju gradonačelnik Pariza dijeli za Božić. Ti lukavci su možda pedesetih, šezdesetih godina, premladi da bi bili stavljeni na gradonačelnikovu listu....A zapravo su bogati ti koji se otrcano obuku i ušepure u zgradu lokalne općine, mašući dokaznim papirom kojem ni dijete ne bi povjerovalo. A mogli bi kupiti tonu bombonijera da uopće ne stegnu pojas!

The translation selected expressions that are appropriately informal and/or colloquial, with a similar affectation as those in the original (definitely not neutral expressions), revealing a judgment and a kind of familiar folk perception (according to which the richest people are also the pettiest and the greediest, perhaps a universal typification). 'Lopovluk' is a colloquial expression for 'thievery;' 'dokopati' is similarly colloquial, suggesting 'to get something at any cost,' having the same association of grabiness as does 'wrangle;' 'ušepure' is as coloured as 'saunter,' suggesting, and ridiculing at the same time, an arrogant way of walking; finally, 'feeling the squeeze' is not rendered literally, but with a similar type of phrase that colourfully refers to the phenomena of experiencing a lack of money. A similar treatment can be observed in other passages reflecting Wroblewski's voice (for example, "Some people, he supposed, would grab the whole thing and dribble it away on nonsense, then feel downcast and remorseful as they watched their current account dwindle, month after month" on p.149).

In one ironic passage, sharply insightful about our attempts to measure, with practical efficiency, what is actually beyond measure, we can hear the voice of the German lawyer in charge of Wroblewski's compensation for ten months in Dachau: "…he was a grown man at the time. He had completed his education. He had a profession….All he had to do when the war ended was carry on as before" (145). The ten months M. Wroblewski spent in the concentration camp happened at a 'convenient' time in his life – according to the lawyer, and so the pension he receives from the Germans is appropriately low, enough to cover "his modest telephone bill, with a bit over" (145). The translation preserves the effect of the lawyer's voice (emblematic of a particular attitude) with the same short, concise sentences, the rhythmic effect of enumeration, and the straight-forward language. The voice of the narrator retreats, allowing the lawyer's voice, to in effect, make fun of itself.

We do not, then, get a final, authoritative version of events from the narrator, since the other voices are allowed to stand on their own and be judged independently by the reader. Contrasts between what is said and what is shown, oscillation between narrative certainty and narrative hypothesis, occasional uncertainty over where a particular postulation has originated (is it the narrator, Wroblewski, etc.) and with what degree of certainty we should accept it as reliable, unsettle the reader and undermine an easy, unified reading. Wroblewski is eager to keep a close watch on his mental health, and a neutral voice reports his fitness and good eyesight and hearing (145), yet several slip-ups during his meeting with the bank official, Mme. Fournier, reveal the cracks in his alertness and memory. Such contrasts, as well as alternations between perspectives and voices also create ironic effects and enable Gallant's sharp wit and critical stance.

The title of this story appears within the story itself, in the following context: "Then the letter came and he began addressing his friend. He avoids certain words, such as "problem," "difficulty," "catastrophe," and says instead, "A state of affairs"" (146). This dry passage suggests Wroblewski's optimism, as well as the potential 'catastrophe' behind the unassuming 'a state of affairs.' There are in my opinion two possible translations of this title: 'Kako stvari stoje,' and 'Stanje stvari.' There is no fitting equivalent in Croatian that would carry the same variety of meanings as English 'affair.' 'Afera,' a loan word from English (as also noted above), has a narrower meaning and almost always carries connotations of sordidness or sensationalism. The neutrality of 'a state of affairs' is best represented by 'stanje stvari,' where 'stvari,' meaning primarily 'things,' is used to say things like 'it's my business' or 'my affairs.' 'Kako stvari stoje,' has the same meaning and a similar neutral tone, but it is more colloquial and does not match the original grammatically, while 'stanje stvari' does so.

In several passages attributable to the voice of Wroblewski, we find the following words: 'fraud,' 'trickery,' 'swindlers,' to 'fool,' (144) 'schemers,' and 'deceit' (145). All of these relate to Wroblewski's thoughts about people whom he imagines trying to obtain the mayor's box of chocolates even though they are not officially entitled to it. This semantic richness, variety of signifiers for what is essentially one common signified, needs to be matched in translation. Were the translation to "contain fewer signifiers than the original" (Berman 283) it would suffer from what Berman terms 'quantitative impoverishment' (283), a lexical loss that results when a translation does not pay heed to "the lexical texture of the work" (Berman 283). This proliferation of terms is relevant as it points toward how well-thought-out and complex this concept/idea is in Wroblewski's mind, the idea of people's dishonesty and their desire "to gain benefit by fraud" (144). Something of his mindset and his voice would be lost were the translation to employ, for example, a single variant: 'prevara'/ 'prevarant.' I matched each signifier with a distinct signifier in the translated version; thus in the TT, we have: prijevara, lopovluk, lukavci, povjerovati, spletkari, varka.

At another point in the story we have what appears to be a deliberate narrowing of signifiers. In Wroblewski's meeting with Mme. Fournier, the bank official who signed the letter offering him a credit, she utters a proliferation of apologies. These are remarkably repetitive, with only two variations: she says the words 'I'm sorry' eight times, and the words 'excuse me' three times. The repetitive apologizing signals Mme. Fournier's genuine discomfort at the situation; the translation aims to keep this repetitive pattern. Each instance of 'excuse me' is translated as 'oprostite;' 'I'm sorry' is mostly translated as 'ispričavam se,' except in two instances. In these, the sentence context asked for a different construction, and 'žao mi je' was the most fitting. Thus two signifiers are replaced by three signifiers in the translation, but the effect of profuse and awkward apologizing is nonetheless rendered.

As suggested above, the story reflects ironically on money, or rather on monetary measures of meaning vs. the incalculable meaning of human existence. The dehumanization of individuals in society's systems, financial and other, surfaces lexically as well. The language of money and bureaucracy crops up in unrelated contexts, and a translation should preserve this subtle element, significant to the texture of the whole. In the first sentence we find the word 'owing': "Owing to his advanced age…M. Wroblewski receives little personal mail" (138); the word is not out of place here, but one of its primary associations is money, monetary debt. This association with finances is preserved in translation, which reads: "Na račun svojih poodmaklih godina," a common usage that can be back-translated as 'on account of his advanced age.' In the same paragraph we are told that M. Wroblewski keeps pictures of his wife's relatives "filed in large brown envelopes," suggesting a bureaucratic kind of organization, which undercuts the personal nature of the thing in question, familial relations. It is recalled in a later reference to 'the system,' with Paris suggested as a place in which "the entire life of every authorized immigrant is lodged inside a computer or crammed between the cardboard covers of a dossier" (145).

„Onaj drugi Pariz“

Dok su one odlučile što će Carol obući na svom vjenčanju (bijelo sa bijelim cvjetovima), bio je kraj poslijepodneva. Madame Germaine je odstranila bilježnice sa skicama, komadiće mrežice i satena, naslage časopisa Vogue; već je imala profesionalni izgled zabrinutosti, kao da to sve nikako ne može izaći na dobro. Mogli su se predvidjeti raskinuti šavovi, dodatna isprobavanja, čak i Caroline suze.

Carolina se prijateljica, Odile, doimala razočaranom. „Bijelo nije *originalno*,“ rekla je. „Da sam to ja, sasvim sigurno se ne bi udala u svoj toj glupoj gomili od čipke, kao za prvu pričest.“ Ona je skidala končiće sa svoje suknje, s pretjeranom preciznošću, kao da se želi potpuno izdvojiti od Carol i njezinih neoriginalnih planova.

Pitam se da li je itko ikad zaprosio Odile, razmišljala je Carol, gledajući mirno kroz prozor. Kako se približavalo njeno vjenčanje, sve više je imala onaj neprisutan stav zaručenih djevojaka: do vjenčanja ništa nije bilo važno, a dalje od njega nije mogla bistro razmišljati. Bilo joj je žao svih neudanih djevojaka svijeta, pogotovo onih koje su, kao Odile, prešle tridesetu. Odile je izgledala blijedo i jadno, šćućurena u džemper i kaput, dok je sa stavom neodobravanja prebirala po primjercima čipke. Činila se u skladu sa vremenom tog dana i prohladnim stanom krojačice. Vani je ulica još bila vlažna od kiše koja je pala ranije tog dana. Na vidiku nije bilo drveća, ni cvijeća, ni utješnog tračka nekog parka. Nitko u ovom dijelu Pariza nije mogao znati da je proljeće.

„Čak *plavo*," rekla je Odile. Ali sa Carol, koja je počela pjevušiti, razgovora očito nije bilo, te je Odile rekla krojačici, „Samo zamislite! Gospođica Frazier je došla raditi u Pariz prošle jeseni, i zaljubila se u šefa svog odjela!"

„*Non*!" ustuknula je Madame Germaine, kao da nijedna druga klijentkinja nikad nije postigla tako izvanrednu stvar.

„Zaljubila se u gospodina Mitchella," rekla je Odile, kimajući glavom. „Na prvi pogled, *le coup de foudre*."

„Na prvi pogled?" rekla je krojačica i s dragošću pogledala u Carol.

„Nešto što nitko ne bih očekivao," rekla je Odile. „Iako, gospodin Mitchell je šarmantan. Baš *šarmantan*."

„Mislim da bi trebale krenuti," rekla je Carol.

Odile je izgledala žalosna, kao da je imala još toga za reći. Carol je zakazala termin za slijedeći dan, i njih dvije su zajedno izašle iz stana, Odiline čvrste pete klopotajući dok su silazile niz stepenice.

„Zašto si bila tako čudna maloprije?" rekla je Odile. „Nisam rekla ništa što nije istina, a znaš kako takve žene vole slušati o vjenčanjima i ljubavi i svemu tome. A priča o tebi i gospodinu Mitchellu je tako krasna. Svima ju pričam."

To ne može biti istina, pomislila je Carol, jer Odile je rijetko bila zainteresirana za ikoga osim sebe, te nikad nije pokazala in najmanju znatiželju prema Carolinim planovima, osim što joj je ponudila naći krojačicu.

„To je bilo strašno romantično," rekla je Odile, „priznala ti to ili ne. Ti i gospodin Mitchell. Naš gospon Mitchell."

Konačno je doprlo do Carol da joj se Odile izruguje.

Toliko su puta ljudi uvjeravali Carol da su njene zaruke romantične, i toliko se bila navikla na tu riječ, da joj je Odilina blaga ironija bila zbunjujuća. Da je itko pitao Carol u točno koji trenutak se zaljubila, ili gdje ju je Howard Mitchell zaprosio, ona bi, sasvim iskreno, zamislila prizor u kojem bi se istodobno nalazili rijeka Seine, bagremi u cvatu, mjesečina, tačke pune ljubičica, i zbrkana, maglovita pozadina sa Eiffelovim tornjem i krivudavim uličicama. To je bilo ono što su svi očekivali, te je ona sama umalo u to povjerovala.

Zapravo, zaprosio ju je za vrijeme ručka, uz salatu od tunjevine. Bili su se poznavali manje od tri tjedna, i razgovori su im dotad bili ograničeni na njihov ured – Američku vladinu agenciju – i ljude u njemu. Carol je imala dvadeset i dvije godine. Nitko ju do tada nije zaprosio, osim jednog neprikladnog studenta medicine, bez novaca i sa osam godina školovanja pred sobom. Bila je pod iluzijom da će za kratko vrijeme biti toliko stara da ju nitko više neće pitati. Prihvatila je odmah, a Howard je proslavio naručivši još jednu bocu vina. Oboje bi bili voljeli piti šampanjac, kao naglašeniji simbol neuobičajenosti, ali i jedno i drugo je bilo previše plaho da ga predloži.

Činjenica da nije zaljubljena u Howarda Mitchella Carol nije nimalo obeshrabrivala. Naučila je, kroz niz korisnih sveučilišnih predavanja o braku, da je zajednički interes (kao naprimjer simpatije prema irskim seterima) pravi temelj sreće, te da je iluzija o ljubavi štetočina nametnuta filmskom industrijom, i skoro u potpunosti odgovorna za visoke stope razvoda. Slične ekonomske podloge, financijska sigurnost, pripadanje istoj crkvi – to su bili stupovi bračne zajednice. Očevi Carol i Howarda su, kroz zapanjujuću slučajnost, oba bili odvjetnici, i oba su ostala poražena u jedinom pokušaju da postanu suci. Carol i Howard su oboje bili protestanti neodređene vrste, iako bi ih ozbiljna rasprava o vjerskim uvjerenjima dobro posramila. A Howard je, najbolje od svega, bio trezven, dovoljno star da pozna samoga sebe, te u potpunosti pouzdan. Bio je ekonomista sa dovoljno razuma da se pridruži korporaciji koja mu je nastavila isplaćivati plaću i kad ga je posudila na rad vladi. Nije bilo razloga da zaruke ili brak propadnu.

Carol se, sa velikom efikasnošću, skoro momentalno dala na posao zaljubljivanja. Ljubav je, kao geranija, iziskivala samo prave uvjete. Uvela bi izložena lošem vremenu ili u turobnoj okolini. Dapače, Carol je šanse za ljubav u kolibi ili podstanarskoj sobi ocijenila nulom. Pod uvjetom dobre klime, dovoljno novca, te sa parom *inteligentnih* (ovo su njena sveučilišna predavanja naglasila) ljudi dobrog karaktera, bilo je dovoljno opustiti se i gledati ljubav kako raste. Cijele zime je, tako, u Parizu ona tražila te prave uvjete. Kad se isprve ništa nije dogodilo, okrivila je vrijeme. Bila je često uvjerena da bi se duboko zaljubila u Howarda samo kad bi kiša prestala padati. Neustrašena, čekala je bolja vremena.

Howard o ovome nije imao nikakvu predodžbu. Njegova je iznenadna ponuda Carol bila poprilično nekarakteristična – on je bio rijetko oprezan čovjek – te se naizmjenično nalazio u stanju tuposti te stanju samohvale. Prije zaruka je ponekad bio usamljen, slabost koju je pripisivao prevelikom radu, te je bio nezadovoljan svojim samačkim kućanstvom, pošto nije uživao u skupljanju starog lončarskog posuđa niti u pripremanju jela u malim vatrostalnim zdjelama. Osim kad bih nabasao na sposobnu kućnu spremačicu, ništa se nije napravilo. To ga ne bi, samo po sebi, ponukalo u brak, da ga nije ozbiljno uznemirila posjeta jedne od njegovih sestara. Ona ga je savjetovala da oženi neku finu djevojku dok ne postane prekasno. „Uskoro," rekla mu je, „bit ćeš tek netko koga ljudi zovu na večeru da popune mjesto za stolom."

Howard je smjesta zamislio taj prizor, i ostao duboko dirnut. Povlačeći se u inčima, rekao je da ne pozna nikog tko bi zadovoljio.

Gluposti, rekla je njegova sestra. Finih djevojaka ima svuda, u izobilju. Onda ga je upozorila da ne oženi Francuskinju, koja bi mogla praviti probleme kad ju jednom dovede kući u Chicago, niti katolkinju, zbog djece, te da izbjegava sve hitre, nervozne, razvedene, ili djevojke starije od dvadeset i četiri godine. Howard je u Parizu znao dosta djevojaka, većina kojih je radila u njegovom uredu ili sličnim poslovnicama. Dojmile su ga se kao vesele i marljive, ali agresivne – nipošto nešto što je želio u kući. Upravo kad je postajao ozbiljno smeten ovom rupom u svom životu, pojavila se Carol Frazier.

Bio je ganut njenom stidljivom pristojnošću, marljivim francuskim govorom sa koledža. Sviđala se njegovim prijateljima, te, još važnije, i ženama njegovih prijatelja. On je nekoliko puta bio ozbiljno zaljubljen, te ljubav nije smatrao pouzdanom emocijom. On i Carol su se dobro slagali, što mu se činilo zadovoljavajućim početkom. Prijatelji su mu, pak, rekli da je ona očito zaljubljena u njega i da je to lijepo za vidjeti. On je to i očekivao, ne zato što je bio uobražen, već zato što se uzimalo zdravo za gotovo da je ljubav, kao bezazleni kućni duh, uvijek prisutna kod mladih žena u prijateljstvima ove vrste. Carol mu je svakako bila draga i pazio je na njenu udobnost. Da se požalila na zubobolju, on bi se pobrinuo da ode kod zubara. Carol su prebacili na drugi odjel, no njih dvoje su se sastajali svaki dan za ručak i večeru, i vodili razgovore bez ikakvih nesuglasica. Pričali su o poslu u Chicagu kojem se Howard vraćao; o vjenčanju, koje se trebalo održati u proljeće; i o filmovima koje su zajedno gledali. Išli su često na zabave, a onda pričali o svima koji su bili prisutni, iako će većinu njih vidjeti sutradan na poslu.

Bio je to pun život, ali Carol nije mogla potisnuti osjećaj da je nešto promašeno. Vrijeme se nastavilo bez poboljšanja. Dijelila je stan u naselju Passy sa dvije Amerikanke, privremeni ménage koji je mogao postojati bilo gdje. Kad se vozila na Métrou, ljudi su se gurali i bili isto neotesani kao i u New Yorku. Restoranska hrana je bila dosadna, a kafe-barovi su bili puni reklama Coca-cole. Nije čudo što nije zaljubljena, pomišljala bi. Gdje je bio Pariz o kojem je čitala? Gdje su bile one elegantne žene skupog izgleda? Gdje su, iznad svega, bili muškarci, oni zgodni, raspoloženi muškarci sa živahnim pjesmama, taj užitak ženskih engleskih romanopisaca? Putujući kroz Pariz do posla i natrag, viđala je jedino otrcane djevojke umotane u kabanice, kako žure na kiši, te muškarce koje bi trebalo ošišati. U čuvenim parkovima, pod vlažnim drvećem, djeca su svadljivo cvilila i bila šamarana. Mislila je ponekad da možda kad bi ona i Howard imali prijatelje Francuze... To mu je i predložila.

„Imaš francusku prijateljicu," rekao je Howard. „Šta je s Odile?"

Ali to nije bilo ono što je htjela reći. Odile Pontmoret je bila Howardova sekretarica, mršava, crnomanjasta žena koja je bila (tako su ljudi govorili) nećakinja jednog/nekog grofa koji je ostao bez novaca. Rijetko se smiješila, te često, zato što joj je govor na engleskom bio istovremeno precizan a netočan, zvučala sarkastično. Cijelu zimu je na posao nosila istu tamnu suknju i ljubičasti pulover. Nikad nikom nije palo na pamet da ju uključi u zabave sastavljene od ljudi iz ureda, a ionako nije ni bilo sigurno da bi došla. Odile i Carol su bile druželjubive jedna s drugom na bezličan način. Ponekad su, ako je Howard bio zauzet, ručale zajedno. Carol je uvijek pazila da se ne žali na Pariz, pošto su je upozorili da vanjska politika njene države ovisi o slučajnim primjedbama. No njena suzdržanost nije naišla na odgovarajuću delikatnost kod Odile; glavno Odilino sjećanje na jedinu posjetu New Yorku, prije rata, je bilo da su njenom ocu naplatili dvadedeset i četiri dolara za vožnju taksijem koja je, kako su kasnije izračunali, morala stajati dva dolara i četrdeset centi. Ponavljajući to, Odile bi ogorčeno pogledala Carol, kao da je Carol vozila taj taksi. „A u hotelu nije bilo usluge, baš nikakve usluge," rekla bi Odile. „Mogao si ostaviti spavaćicu na podu i oni bi pomeli oko nje. I još očekivali napojnicu."

Ova njena jedina zapažanja o Americi, Odile je ponavljala do krajnjih granica Caroline dobrodušne prirode. Odile nikad nije pričala o svom životu izvan ureda, o kojem je Carol žudjela čuti, i doticala se sadašnjosti samo da bi se sa žaljenjem osvrtala na prošlost. „Prije rata smo putovali, išli smo posvuda," pričala bi. „Sad, s našim jadnim malim frankom, sve je gotovo. Radim da bi pomogla porodici. Brat mi promovira vina – *španjolska* vina. Radimo i radimo da naši roditelji ne bi osjetili promjenu i da Martine, naša sestra, može studirati glazbu."

Govoreći to, izgledala bi zapanjeno i ljutito, te bi Carol imala osjećaj da Odile nekako nju optužuje. Obično su jele u restoranu Odilinog izbora – Carol je imala takta što se tog tiče, jer je Odile zarađivala manje od nje – u kojem je hrana bila grudava i nedovoljna, a flourescentno svjetlo svima davalo bolestan izgled. Carol bi bacila pogled na susjedne stolove, za kojima su sjedili zlovoljni i bučni pariški uredski radnici i trgovci, i primijetila da su kaputi svima predugi ili prekratki, da su im krzna neukusna.

Mora tu postojati nešto više, pomislila bi. Jel' bilo moguće da ove loše dotjerane djevojke vole živjeti u Parizu? Sentimentalne pjesme o tom gradu za njih sasvim sigurno nisu imale značenja. Da li je puno njih bilo zaljubljeno, ili – još manje vjerovatno – da li je iti jedan muškarac mogao biti zaljubljen u iti jednu od njih?

Svake večeri, odlazeći iz zgrade u kojoj su ona i Howard radili, Carol bi zastala na terasi stubišta između prvog i drugog kata da bi kroz prozor gledala u tmuran zimski sumrak, razmišljajući da se večer, jedna večer posebne vrste sad stvara svuda po gradu, i da ona u njoj nema nikakve uloge. U taj isti sat, ljudi su se izlijevali iz stare kuće preko puta koja je sad bila muzej, i Carol bi ih gledala kako užurbano odlaze pod svojim kišobranima. Pitala se kuda idu i gdje žive i što će večerati. Njeno zanimanje za njih nije bilo određeno; nije imala nagon da izleti na ulicu i predstavi im se. Stvar je jednostavno bila u tome da je Carol vjerovala da oni znaju u čemu je tajna; kad bi samo razgovarala s pravom osobom, ili otvorila prava vrata, ili skrenula u neku skrivenu ulicu, grad bi se rastvorio pred njom i ona bi se zaljubila. Nakon ove pauze na stubištu zaboravila bi sva svoja razočaranja (one Parma ljubičice koje su bilo nepravilno rezane i svezane, tako da su u minuti uvenule), i trčala niz ostale stepenice, namjeravajući sve reći Howardu i vidjeti da li on dijeli njezin kratkotrajni optimizam.

Jedno od tih večeri, nedugo nakon početka hladnog vremena, primijetila je mlađeg muškarca kako sjedi na jednoj iz negostoljubivog reda stolica, stavljenih u predvorje za one koji traže posao. Izgledao je blijedo i bolesno, a rukavi od kaputa su mu bili kratki, kao da još raste. Gleadao je u nju s izrazom pametnog djeteta, istovremeno drskim i povučenim. Imala je dojam da ju je vidio kako zastaje kod prozora na stubištu, te da ga je to iz nekog razloga zabavljalo. Nije nipošto izgledao kao da tu pripada. Spomenula ga je Howardu.

„To mora da je bio Felix," rekao je Howard. „Odilin prijatelj." Toliko je naglasio riječ „prijatelj" da je Carol osjetila da tu ima više, daleko više, te da Howardu, ikao je volio trač kao i svako drugi, Odilina posla nisu dovoljno zanimljiva da bi ih raspravljao. „Običavao ju je svako veče čekati vani. Sad se valjda skloni unutra od kiše."

„Ali nikad ga nije spominjala," pobunila se Carol. „I mora biti mlađi od nje, i još tako blijed i smiješnog izgleda. Odakle je došao?"

Howard nije znao. Felix je Austrijanac, mislio je, ili Čeh. Nešto oko njega je bilo čudno, jer iako očito nije imao dovoljno za pojesti, uvijek je imao obilje američkih cigareta. To je bio loš znak. „Zašto te toliko zanima?" pitao je. Ali Carol nije uopće zanimalo.

Poslije toga, Carol je viđala Felixa svake večeri. Bio je uvijek pristojan i ponekad promrmljao mehanički pozdrav kad bi prošla pored njegove stolice. I dalje je izgledao umorno i nezdravo, i Carol se pitala da li je istina da nema dovoljno za pojesti. Spomenula ga je Odili, koja je bila iznenađujuće voljna pričati o svom prijatelju. Imao je dvadeset jednu godinu, i bio je bez rodbine. Svi su poginuli na kraju rata, u zadnjim bombardiranjima. U Parizu je stanovao ilegalno, bez važeće putovnice ili papira za rad. Policiji je dugo trebalo da to isprave, a u međuvremenu, pošto mu nije bilo dozvoljeno raditi, Felix se bavio drugim stvarima. Odile nije rekla koje su to druge stvari bile, i Carol je ostala pomalo šokirana.

Te večeri prije spavanja, mislila je na Felixa, i na to da mu je samo dvadeset i jedna godina. Ona i Felix su, znači, bili bliži po godinama nego on i Odile ili ona i Howard. Kad sam ja išla u školu, on je išao u školu, pomislila je. Kad je rat prestao, bilo nam je četrnaest i petnaest godina . . . Ali tu je izgubila nit, jer dok je Carol bila na praznicima, Felixu su poginuli roditelji. Njihova bliskost u godinama ju je neočekivano utješila, kao da ipak netko u ovom razočaravajućem gradu ima neku povezanost s njom. Ujutro se stidila svojih nevjernih misli – najbliža veza u Parizu joj je na kraju krajeva ipak bio Howard – i odlučila je ignorirati Felixa kad ga ponovo vidi. Te večeri, kad je prošla kraj njegove stolice, rekao je „Dobro veče," a ona je najednom postala izrazito svjesna svakog djelića svoje odjeće: pritiska remena na struku, uštipa naušnica, težine haljine, čak i rukavica, koje su grebale kao platno za vreće. Bio je to uznemiravajući osjećaj; nije bila sigurna da joj se sviđa.

„Ne vidim zašto Felix mora stalno sjediti u tom prolazu," žalila se Howardu. „Zar ne može čekati Odile negdje drugdje?"

Howard je bio suviše zauzet da bi se zamarao Felixom. Palo mu je na pamet da se Carol ponaša zamorno, te da je ovo kukanje o tome tko sjedi u prolazu samo jedan primjer njenog novog ponašanja. Počela se žaliti i o njihovim prijateljima, te govorila da želi upoznati nove ljude i vidjeti više Pariza. Ponekad je gledala u njega željno i bespomoćno, kao da postoji nešto što bi on trebao reći ili učiniti. On je bio istinski zbunjen; njemu se činilo da se dobro slažu i da su, umjereno, sretni zajedno. Ali Carol se mijenjala. Iskopavala je neobične, jeftine restorane. Tjerala ga je u šetnje po kiši. Rekla je da bi trebali ići gledati izlazak sunca sa stepenica od Sacré-Coeur, i čak ga je uspjela odvući tamo, gotovo iznemoglog od hladnoće. I, kao što bi on možda predvidjeo, taj izlet se sveo na ništa jer je bila kišna zora i sumnjičav žandar ih je oboje poslao kući.

Za Božić, Carol ga je molila da ju odvede na pjevanje božićnih pjesama na Place Vendôme. Zamišljala je da bi tamo, s lagano padajućim snijegom i zborom malih, rumenih dječaka koji pjevaju među osvjetljenim borovima, pronašla nešto – neko toplo sjećanje koje bi ju, kasnije, zbližilo s Howardom, neki tračak onog Pariza kojeg su drugi ljudi voljeli. Ali snijega, naravno, nije bilo. Howard i Carol su stajali pod kišobranom dok je fina, magličasta kiša padala po malim pjevačima zbora, koji su, isprobavajući razinu glasova za emitiranje, stalno iznova ponavljali početne taktove pjesme „Il est né, le Divin Enfant.“ Na rubovima gomile su se motali fotografi za novine, a rakete, koje su osvjetljavale prizor za kamere dnevnika, su im puhale u lice jedak dim. Howard je počeo kašljati. Oko trga, pomolili su se na svojim malim balkonima stanari Place Vendôma. Neki su imali čaše pjenušca u rukama, kao da su prekinuli ugodnu zabavu da bi na trenutak izašli na zrak. Carol je pogledala gore u osvjetljene, otvorene prolaze od vrata, kroz koje se mogao vidjeti obojani strop, osvjetljeni luster. No ništa se nije dogodilo. Činilo se da nitko od tih ljudi nije niti lijep niti izuzetan. Niti je itko od njih rekao, „Pa *tko* je šarmantna djevojka tamo dolje? Hajdemo ju pozvati kod nas!“

Howard je ispirio nos i rekao da mu je hladno nogama; promuvali su se preko trga do izloga modnog krojača, u kojem je maleni Isus nosio broš od umjetnog dijamanta, a klanjajući anđeo od žbuke nudio poznatu marku parfema. „Pa to liči na New York ili tako nešto,“ rekla je Carol, plačna od razočarenja. Kad je zastala da zatvori kišobran, vjetar joj pod noge donio komadić imele, te je, pogledavši prema gore, vidjela da su na ulične lampe od trga zavezane jeftine, šljokaste ledene svjećice i buketići imele. To je izgledalo lijepo, i prilično siromašno, i pomislila je na ogroman bor u newyorškom centru Rockefeller. Odjednom joj je bilo žao Pariza, kao što joj je bilo žao Felixa jer mu je bila tek dvadeset i jedna godina i jer je izgledao gladan. U grlu [illegible] nastala toplina, kao uvod u navalu suza. Sagnuvši se, pokupila je grančicu imele i stavila ju u džep.

„Jel' to sve?“ rekao je Howard. „Jel' to ono što si htjela vidjeti?“ Osjećao se hladno i neprijatno, no, pošto je bio Božić, nije rekao ništa nestrpljivo, nego je nastojao sjetiti se da je njoj ipak samo dvadeset i jedna godina.

„Valjda.“

Našli su taksi i priveli večer kraju s prijateljima s posla. Howard je iz njihove avanture u Place Vendôme izveo zabavnu priču. Carol je po prvi put shvatila da nešto može biti savršeno točno, ali neistinito – jer njima niti jedan dio te večeri nije bio smiješan – te da se to možda odnosi i na više grana životnog iskustva od poneke zabavne priče. Pažljivo je gledala u Howarda, kao da je naučila vrijednu stvar.

Howard je dan poslije Božića dobio gadnu prehladu, rezultat stajanja na kiši. Cijelu preostalu zimu ju nije mogao otresti, te Carol, grižno osjećajući da je ona tomu kriva, nije predlagala druge izlete. Pitanje zaljubljenosti je, privremeno, odložila na stranu. Pariz nije bio mjesto za to; možda je bio, prije pedesetak godina, ili kad god su već bile napisane sve one pjesme. Da raskine zaruke nije joj palo na pamet.

Zimu je istrošila radeći, njegujući Howarda i njegovu prehladu, zabavljajući se uredskim tračevima, te, tu i tamo, ručajući sa Odile, koja je bila isto nezadovoljavajuća kao i uvijek. Bilo je skoro proljeće kad je Odile, zastajući kod Carolinog radnog stola, rekla da Martine sljedeće nedjelje održava svoj debitantni koncert. Bilo je to privatno okupljanje, koncert po preplati. Odile je zvučala neodređeno. Bacila je dvije karte na Carolin stol i rekla, odlazeći, „Ako ti se ide.“

„*Ako* mi se ide!“

Carol je odletila smjesta reći Howardu. „To je neka privatna stvar, s glazbom,“ rekla je. „Trebalo bi biti važnih glazbenika, pošto je debi, i biti će cijela Odilina obitelj. I stari grof – svi.“ Ona je skoro od Odilinog osiromašenog ujaka očekivala da se pojavi u kostimu iz osamnaestog stoljeća, s rukama sklopljenim na vrhu štapa.

Howard je rekao da može što se njega tiče, pod uvjetom da neće morati stajati na kiši.

„Naravno da ne! Pa to je *koncert*.“ Pogledale je u karte; bile su to ručno ispisane ceduljice, s brojevima otiskanim strojem za umnožavanje. „Vjerovatno je kod nekog u kući,“ rekla je. „U jednom od onih starih, ljupkih salona. Ili u malom, oličenom kazalištu. Kažu da po cijelom Parizu ima malenih kazališta u obiteljskom vlasništvu, koja stranci nikad ne vide.“

Bila je izvan sebe od uzbuđenja. I što ako je Parizu trebala cijela zima da oživi? Neki stranci tu žive vječno i nikad ga ne dožive. Potrošila je skoro cijelu tjednu plaću na bijeli pernati šešir, te uvježbavala nekoliko elegantnih francuskih izraza. „Oui, elle est charmante,“ govorila je ogledalu. „La petit Martine est tout à fait ravissante. Je connais très bien Odile. Une coupe de champagne? Mais oui, merci bien. Ah, voici mon fiancé! Monsieur Mitchell, le Baron de . . .“ i tako dalje.

Osjećala se bliska Odili, kao da su dugo bile dobre prijateljice. Kad je Odile, dva dana prije koncerta, zijevajući rekla da Martine plače dan i noć jer nema prikladnu haljinu, Carol je pitala, „Da li bi dala meni da joj posudim haljinu?“

Odile je najednom prestala zijevati i počela zavrtati rukave pulovera kao da je to posao koji iziskuje svu njenu pažnju. Konačno je rekla, „To bi bilo jako ljubazno od tebe.“

„Hoću reći,“ počela je Carol, osjećajući se nespretno, „da li bi to bilo u redu? Imam zgodnu blijedo-zelenu haljinu od tila koju sam donijela iz New Yorka. Samo sam ju dvaput obukla.“

„Jako lijepo zvuči,“ rekla je Odile.

Carol je sljedeći dan istresla haljinu iz šuštavog papira i donijela ju na posao. Odile joj se zahvalila bez žara, ali Carol je već znala da je to jednostavno njen način.

„Idemo na privatni glazbeni debi,“ napisala je majci i ocu. „Najmlađa nećakinja grofa od Quelquechose . . . posudila sam joj svoju haljinu od zelenog tila.“ Više od toga nije rekla, ne bi li ispalo dolično ležerno. Pisma joj, do tada, nisu sadržavala puno zanimljivosti.

Ispostavilo se da se na adresi koju je Odile dala Carol nalazi obično, otrcano kazalište u drugom Arrondissementu. Bila je to zabita ulica, i taksist je toliko puta morao stajati da bi pogledao u ulični vodič, da su zakasnili pola sata. Glazba ih je dočekala u praznom predvorju, gdje je na plakatu pisalo samo „J.S.Bach.“ Vratar ih je, zlovoljno, na prstima odveo do sjedala, i rekao Carol da molim lijepo ima malo obzira za ljude iza sebe te da skine šešir. Carol ga je skinula dok se Howard pretresao za sitniš za vratarevu napojnicu. Bacila je pogled oko sebe: kazalište je bilo manje od upola puno, a glazba koja je stizala iz pravca malog orkestra na pozornici je imala tanki, odzvanjajući zvuk, kao da kruži praznom komorom. Odile nije bilo nigdje na vidiku.

Za trenutak je ugledala Felixa kako sjedi sam par redova od njih. Nasmiješio joj se – isuviše prisno, pomislila je Carol. Izgledao je blijeđe nego inače, i skoro kao da je namjerno neuredan. Barem za koncert si je mogao uzeti truda. Osjetila je trzaj iritacije a istovremeno joj je srce počelo tako brzo udarati da joj se činilo da ta radnja svakako mora biti vidljiva.

Pa što je sa mnom, pomislila je. Ako su sve proto priče na tu temu bile za vjerovati, ovako nešto je spadalo u tradiciju za buduće nevjeste. Možda se, u ovom neobećavajućem trenutku, počela zaljubljivati. Okrenula se u stolici i pogledala u Howarda; izgledao je baš kao i inače. Ponovo se namjestila u sjedalu, te u glavi počela namještati stan koji će njih dvoje imati u Chicagu. Tu i tamo bi se upalila kazališna svjetla, i trgnula ju iz nekog problema oko zastora ili žaluzina; jednom je Howard izašao van da zapali. Kad je Martine izašla na pozornicu, sa svojom violinom, Carol je taman bila završila tapetiranje spavaće sobe bijelo-zelenim tonovima. U taj isti trenutak, komad gipsa, koji je bio podržavao bucmastu i oličenu nogu kipa nimfe, se odvojio od stropa i stropoštao između sjedala, tek promašivši Howardovu glavu. Svi su se ustali da vide, a Martine i dirigent su ljutito gledali u Howarda i Carol, kao da su oni krivi. Komešanje je bilo strašno. Carol se spustila u sjedalu, s rukom preko očiju. U glavi joj je, pored svih tih muka, ostao Martinein lik – u plavoj haljini koja joj je loše stajala, i jaknici. Nije obukla Carolinu lijepu til haljinu; vjerovatno ju nije ni namjeravala obući.

Carol se s jadom pitala zašto su došli. Primijetila je po prvi put da su svi ljudi oko njih čudni i otrcani. Neprozračeno kazalište je bilo ispunjeno mirisom ustajalih zimskih kaputa; počela ju je boliti glava, a Martineina violina joj je cvililа u uhu kao zviždaljka. Konačno je sviranje prestalo i upalila se svjetla. Koncert je završio. Bilo je malo aplauza, ali ljudi su bili zauzeti dovikivanjem između redova i navlačenjem kaputa. Martine se rukovala sa dirigentom te, nakon zbunjenog osvrtanja po dvorani, odlutala.

„Jel' to sve?“ rekao je Howard. Ustao je i protegnuo se. Carol nije odgovorila. Upravo je bila vidjela Feliksa i Odilu zajedno. Odile mu je nešto brzo govorila i izgledala nezadovoljno. Nosila je istu suknju i pulover koje je Carola gledala cijele zime, a kaput je držala preko ruke.

„Odile!“ viknula je Carol. No Odile je mahnula i probila si put kroz red sjedala do druge strane kazališta, gdje se pridružila nekim starijim ljudima i jednom mladom čovjeku. Zajedno su otišli iza pozornice.

Njena obitelj, pomislila je Carol, zgađena od uvrede. Nije nas ni upoznala, ni došla popričati. Sad je postala sigurna da ju je Odile pozvala samo da napuni dvoranu, ili zato što je imala par karata s kojima nije znala šta bi.

„Ajmo,“ rekao je Howard. Sjedala su im bila blizu pročelja. Dok su došli do predvorja, bilo je skoro prazno. Pod ravnodušnim očima vratara, Howard je usmjerio Carol u kaput. „Bome i nisu napravili nekakav spektakl za Martine,“ rekao je.

„Ne, nisu.“

„Nikakvog cvijeća,“ rekao je. „Ni ime joj nije bilo na programu. Niko ne bi niti znao.“

Vani se smračilo, a s ruba krova kiša se slivala kao vodena ploča. „Ti ostani tu,“ rekao je Howard. „Ja ću naći taksi.“

„Ne," rekla je Carol. „Ostani sa mnom. Kiša neće potrajati." Nije se mogla prisiliti da mu kaže koliko je povrijeđena i ponižena, kakva propast je bilo ovo poslijepodne. Poveo ju je da se sakriju iza plakatne ploče.

„Ona haljina," nastavio je. „Mislio sam da si joj nešto bila posudila."

„Jesam. Nije obukla. Ne znam zašto."

„Pitaj Odile."

„Ne zanima me. Radije bih to pustila."

Složio se. Vjerovao je da se Carol s tom haljinom skoro svjesno izvrgnula nedostojnosti, te je shvaćao ponos takve vrste. Da bi joj skrenuo pažnju pričao je o poslu koji ga čeka u Chicagu, o svojim prijateljima, o bratovoj jedrilici.

Bez da je to htio, zvučao je, u sklopu kiše i Carolinog razočarenja, kao da pomalo čezne za domom. To raspoloženje je prešlo na Carol. Pogledala je u bijeli pernati šešir, kojeg ju je vratar natjerao da skine, i najednom rekla, „Voljela bih da sam kod kuće. Voljela bih da sam u svojoj zemlji, sa svojim prijateljima."

„Biti ćeš," rekao je, „za nekoliko mjeseci." Nadao se da neće početi plakati.

„Dosta mi je toga kakvo je sve ovdje – staro i trulo i raspadajuće."

„Misliš onaj komad stropa?"

Okrenula se od njega, očajna od toga kako on uporno ne shvaća bit stvari, i ugledala Felixa nedaleko od njih. Bio je naslonjen na budicu za karte, prepušteno gledajući u kišu. Kad je primijetio da ga Carol gleda rekao je, ignorirajući Howarda, „Odile je sa svojima iza pozornice." Napravio je grimasu i nastavio, „Nema pristupa za nas strance."

Odilina obitelj nije prihvaćala Felixa; Carol je jedva provarila ovu misao, koja joj je dala neočekivani i uvrijeđeni šok, kad je shvatila šta je mislio sa „nas strance.“ Bilo je bezobrazno od Odile dopustiti svojoj obitelji da vrijeđaju njenog prijatelja; istovremeno, bilo je još manje ljubazno od njih uključiti Carol u tu istu kategoriju stranaca. Pa svakako je Odile mogla vidjeti razliku između Carol i ovog blijedog mladića koji se „bavio drugim stvarima.“ Imala je osjećaj da su Felixa i nju spojili na nepodoban način, te da pluta daleko od svega što joj je znano i pouzdano. Bez odgovora, pognula je glavu i okrenula se, uljudno ali i odlučno.

„Smiješan klinac,“ primijetio je Howard kad se Felix polako odšetao pod kišu, s rukama u džepovima.

„Grozan je,“ rekla je Carol, toliko naprasito da se Howard zapiljio u nju. „On nije smiješan. On je parazit. Živi od Odile. Ni ne radi, samo visi okolo i bulji u ljude. Odile kaže da nema putovnice. Pa zašto ju ne *nabavi*? Svaki čovjek koji to hoće, može raditi. Zašto ima takvih ljudi? Svi dečki koje sam ikad poznavala kod kuće su bili dobro odgojeni i muževni. Nikad nisam poznavala nekog kao Felix.“

Stala je, zadihana, a Howard je rekao, „Pa pusti Odili tu brigu.“

„Odile!“ uskliknula je Carol. „Odile mora da je luda. Što ona misli? Njezina obitelj bi trebala tome stati na kraj. Cijela stvar je grozna. Loše je i za ured. Treba to zaustaviti. Pa zaboga, on ju nikad neće oženiti. On je samo dječak, siroče. Njemu trebaju prijatelji, i poznanstva, i netko njegovih godina. Zašto bi oženio Odile? Šta mu treba jedna usidjelica iz stare, raspadnute obitelji? Njemu treba čestit obrok, i – i pomoć.“ Stala je, zapanjena. Umalo je bila rekla „i ljubav.“

Howard, sad već s one strane iznenađenosti, je osjećao samo rastući val iritacije. Nije volio histerične žene. Njegove sestre se nikad nisu tako ponašale.

„Išla bih *kući*," rekla je, skoro zavijajući.

Howard je otišao naći taksi, sretan da se može maknuti. Mislio je da „kući" znači stan u Passyu koji dijeli sa dvije Amerikanke.

Za Carol, koncert je bio kranji *clou*. Prestalo ju je biti briga za Pariz, za Odile, ili za svoje osjećaje prema Howardu. Kad joj je Odile vratila zelenu haljinu, lijepo ispeglanu i složenu u kartonsku kutiju, rekla je samo, „Ostavi ju na mom stolu." Kako se činilo, svi su smatrali normalnim da joj sad jedina zanimacija bude kroj vjenčanice. Počeli su davati zabave u njenu čast. Izljev pažnje je ublažavao njene strahove. Bila je dobre volje i nije tražila od Howarda da ju vodi na umarajuća mjesta. On je sad, opet, smatrao da je napravio ispravnu odluku, i pripisao njenu kratkotrajnu čudljivost živcima. Carol je nakon nekog vremena opet počela ručavati sa Odile, ali nije spominjala koncert.

Što se tiče Felixa, potpuno ga je izbjegavala. Ponekad je čekala da Odile ode iz ureda prije nego što bi sama otišla. Ili bi se pripravila i hitro prošla kraj njega, ignorirajući njegovo „Dobro veče." Više nije zastajala na stepenicama da bi gledala u sumrak; bila je drugačijeg raspoloženja. Vjerovala je da se nešto povoljno dogodilo njenoj duši, i da je postala nedodirljiva. Uskoro je postala sposobna proći pored Felixa bez ijednog drhtaja, i nakon nekog vremena ga je prestala uopće primjećivati.

„Jel' si primijetila da je zima gotova?“ rekla je Odile. Ona i Carol su izašle iz ulice od krojačice i skrenule u široku, kosu aveniju. „Kiša nije padala već satima. Ovo je bila najduža zima koje se sjećam, iako mi se čini da čovjek to kaže svake godine.“

„I meni je bila dugačka,“ rekla je Carol. Bilo je istina da je gotova. Krakata drveća avenije su bila pokrivena zelenilom, kao omotom od papira. Nekoliko ljudi je sjedilo ispred trgovina, upijajući sunce. Sve je najednom bilo kao kad izađeš iz tunela.

Odile se okrenula prema Carol i nasmiješila, za nju rijedak izraz lica. „Oprosti što sam bila nepristojna kod Madame Germaine maloprije,“ rekla je. „Ne znam što mi je ovih dana – prema svima sam odvratna. Ali nisam smjela biti prema tebi.“

„Nema veze,“ rekla je Carol. Malo se zarumenila, jer je od Howarda naučila da se srami nečeg toliko izravnog kao što je isprika. „Zaboravila sam na to. Zapravo, nisam ni primijetila.“

„Sad se praviš fina,“ rekla je Odile nesretno. „Ali stvarno, nešto nije u redu sa mnom. Stalno se brinem – oko novaca, Martine, oko Felixa. Mislim da nije zdravo.“ Carol je nešto promrljala, utješno ali nerazgovijetno. Pogledavši ju, Odile je rekla, „Kud sad ideš?“

„Nigdje. Kući, valjda. Ovih dana stalno imam nešto raditi.“

„Što ne bi išla sa mnom?“ Odile je zastala na ulici i uzela ju za ruku. „Ja idem kod Felixa. On živi tu blizu. Bio bi tako iznenađen!“

„*Felix*?“ Carol je automatski pogledala na sat. Pa mora da je imala nešto za obaviti, neki dogovor? No Odile ju je požurivala za sobom. Carol je pomislila, Ovo nikako ne valja. No stigle su do bulevara de Grenelle, iznad kojeg je išao Métro, u cijevnom oklopu od crvene cigle. Ispod njega je svjetlo padalo u uzorcima; bulevarom

su se redale ružne male trgovine, i mračni, žućkasto-obojeni kafići. To je bilo nešto sasvim drugo od uredne ulice udaljene jedan blok kuća, gdje je bio stan od krojačice. „Je li daleko?" rekla je Carol nervozno. Nije joj se sviđao izgled ovog kvarta. Odile je odmahnula glavom. Prešle su preko bulevara i nekoliko uskih, krivudavih uličica koje se bile pune tržničkih gomila i tački uz stazu. Bio je to dio Pariza koji Carol još nije bila vidjela; iako se nalazio na Lijevoj Obali, nije bio lijep, nije bio slikovit. Nije bilo malenih restorana, ni studentskih hotela. Bio je jednostavno zapušten i prljav, i svi su se činili loše volje. Arapi, ljenčareći u vežama, gledali li su u ove dvije djevojke i dozivali ih, smijući se.

„Gledaj ravno naprijed," rekla je Odile. „Ako gledaš u njih, dođu i uzmu te za ruku. Kad sama dolazim gore je."

Carol je pomislila, kako grozno od Felixa pustiti Odile da sama hoda ovakvim ulicama.

„Tu," rekla je Odile. Stala je ispred zgrade na kojoj je bojom napisana riječ „Hôtel" bila skoro izbrisana. Popele su se uz stepenište koje je zaudaralo po plijesni, Carol pazeći da joj se suknja ne očeše o zid. S nervozom se pitala šta će Howard reći kad čuje da je posjetila Felixa u njegovoj hotelskoj sobi. Na katu, Odile je pokucala na jedna od nekoliko vrata. Felix ih je pustio unutra. To mu je uzelo par dobrih momenata, pošto je spavao. Nije izgledao ni najmanje iznenađen već ih je pozvao unutra s blagim naklonom, kao da često prima goste u sobi.

Soba je bila toliko zatrpana, krevet toliko neuredan, da je Carol zbunjeno stajala, pitajući se gdje tu čovjek može sjesti. Odile se iz istih stopa bacila na krevet, ostavljajući torbicu na podu koji je bio od betona, i hrapav od prljavštine.

„Umorna sam," rekla je. „Birale smo Carolinu vjenčanicu. Bijela je, i *jako* lijepa." Felixu je košulja bila otkopčana i lice bez imalo boje. Pogledao je u Carol postrance, smiješeći se. Na stolu je stajala alkoholna peć, neke šarene plastične zdjele i karton sa šećerom. U malecnom lavoru, nad kojim je visjela slavina s hladnim vodom, bili su tanjur i žlica, i tu i tamo sa strane Felixov brijači pribor i jedna namučena četkica za zube.

„Slobodno sjedite na tu stolicu," rekao je Carol, no nije se pokrenuo da makne košulju i džemper i kabanicu koji su na njoj bili naslagani. Sve ostalo što posjeduje je, činilo se, bilo na podu. Soba je gledala na dvorište i bila dosta mračna. „Ugrijaću onu kavu," rekao je Felix, kao da se trudi naći nešto što bi kao domaćin mogao napraviti.

„Gospođice Frazier, sjedite." Prinijeo je šibicu peći i plavi plamen je poskočio uz zid. Zagledao se u lonac s kavom, pomirisao ju, i dodao hladne vode. „Novi PX se taman otvorio," rekao je Odili. Stavio je lonac na vatru, očito time zadovoljen. „Bio sam tamo vidjeti što ima," rekao je. „Ništa posebno. Stvarno je to žalosno. Sad je sve organizirano u takvim razmjerima da nema mjesta za male ljude kao ja. Čekao sam vani i konačno pokupio nešto cigareta – dvije šteke samo – od jednog vojnika."

Nastavio je pričati, a Carol, nenaviknuta na njegovu konverzaciju, nije mogla prepoznati da li je ozbiljan ili se zeza. Bila se konačno odlučila ipak sjesti na kabanicu. Namršteno je gledala u ruke, pitajući se zašto ga Odile nije naučila praviti kavu kako treba i zašto priča kao kriminalac. Carol je ideja da čovjeku možda nije dozvoljeno raditi bila besmislena. Gajila je nepokolebljivo uvjerenje da svatko tko je iskreno voljan raditi to i može. Brati jabuke, razmišljala je neodređeno, ili dolje u rudnicima, gdje uvijek trebaju ljude.

Odile je pogledala u Carol, kao da zna šta ova misli. „Jadni Felix ne pripada na ovaj svijet," rekla je. „Trebao je poginuti na kraju rata. Ovako, svake godine postaje stariji. Za mjesec dana biti će mu dvadeset i dvije."

Ali Odili je bilo preko trideset. Carol je smatrala njihovu razliku u godinama neukusnom, te pomislila da je indiskretno od Odile tako ju naglašavati. Felix, koji je dotad neučinkovito u hladnoj vodi ispirao one plastične zdjele, je sad usipao kavu. Gurnuo je jednu posudu prema Odili; onda je najednom uzeo njenu ruku, okrenuo ju i poljubio joj dlan. „*Zašto* sam trebao poginuti?" rekao je.

Carol, kojoj je od neugodnosti nestalo zraka, se zagledala u ciglu od dvorišnog zida. Motala je prstima dok je nisu zaboljeli. Kako se mogu preda mnom tako ponašati, mislila je, i još u tako prljavoj sobi? Pomisao da su možda zaljubljeni joj je po prvi put došla u glavu, i pozlilo joj je od nje. Felix joj je, smiješeći se, dao posudu s kavom, i ona ju je uzela bez susretanja njegovog pogleda. Sjeo je na krevet pored Odile i, sretan, rekao, „Drago mi je da ste došle. Obe izgledate prelijepo."

Carol je pogledala u Odile i pomislila, nije ona lijepa pa kako god ti nategnuo kavalirske manire. Pristojno je odgovorila, „Sve Francuskinje su zgodne."

„Većina su strašila," rekao je Felix. Nijedna mu to nije osporila, i jedino je Carol izgledala zbunjena naglim svršetkom razgovora. Tragala je za nečim što bi mogla reći, no Odile je svoju posudu stavila na pod, ponovila da je umorna, ispružila se, i – činilo se najednom – zaspala.

Felix ju je pogledao. „Stvarno može isključiti svijet kad god poželi," rekao je, ukazujući Carolinim zapanjenim ušima da je bio sasvim naviknut vidjeti Odile kako spava. Naravno da je to mogla sama pogoditi, ali zašto je Felix to morao napraviti

očitim? Bilo ju je sramota toga koliko je bila zabrinuta za Felixa i koliko je trčala za Odile, željna da joj upozna porodicu. Sve se svelo na ovo, na ovu prljavu sobu. Howard je bio u pravu, pomislila je. Ne isplati se.

U isto vrijeme, bila je smetena intimnošću u kojoj su se njih dvoje sad našli. Bila bi opuštenija sama u sobi s njim, nego ovako, sa Odile pored njega, usnutom na njegovom krevetu.

„Moram ići," rekla je nervozno.

„Da," rekao je Felix, ne zaustavljajući ju.

„Ali ne znam se sama vratiti." Osjećala je da bi mogla zaplakati.

„Ima taksija," neodređeno je rekao. „Ali ja vas mogu otpratiti do Métroa, ako hoćeš." Zakopčao je košulju i pogledom tražio jaknu, bez očite namjere da probudi Odile.

„Hoćemo ju ostaviti tu?" rekla je Carol. „Zar se ne bi trebala pozdraviti?"

Izgledao je iznenađen. „Ne bi ni pomislio uznemiravati ju," rekao je. „Ako spava, znači da je umorna." I Carol na ovo nije imala što reći.

Izašao je za njom niz stepenice i na ulicu, sada mračnu, sa neonskim prugama za prepoznavanje kafića. Nisu puno pričali, a pošto se bojala mraka i Arapa, Carol se držala blizu Felixa. Felix je stao, na bulevaru de Grenelle, kod ulaza za Métro.

„Tu," rekao je. „Onim stepenicama gore. Vodi vas ravno na Passy."

Pogledala ga je, osjećajući da ovakav oproštaj nije dovoljan. Kritizirala ga je Howardu i naučila sebe da ga ignorira, ali tu, u dijelu grada u kojem se nije mogla ni orijentirati, više već ikad se osjećala zarobljenom u zidovima vlastite sramežljivosti, nesposobna reći, „Hvala," ili, „Hvala za kavu," niti bilo što drugo pristojno i normalno.

Imala je neobjašnjiv i neugodan osjećaj da je nešto došlo kraju, i da Felixa, pa čak i Odile, više nikad neće vidjeti.

Felix je uhvatio njen pogled, ili se barem tako činilo. Rastrešeno je bacio pogled na Bar des Sportifs, te na 'sportaše' u njemu, i rekao, „Kad bi mi posudili malo novaca, mogao bi vam kupiti piće prije nego odete."

Njegovo besramno žicanje ju je u trenutku oporavilo. „Nemam vremena za piće," rekla je, najednom sva užurbana, kao da je s malenim škljocem on upao u pravu ladicu. „Ali ako obećate odvesti Odile na večeru, posuditi ću vam dvije tisuće franaka."

„U redu," rekao je Felix. Gledao ju je kako uzima novac iz torbice, prihvatio ga bez srama i stavio u džep jakne.

„Odvedite ju na finu večeru negdje," ponovila je Carol.

„Naravno."

„Joj!" Dovodio ju je u očaj. „Zašto se ne ponašate kao ostali ljudi? Ne možete stalno ovako živjeti. Mogli bi otići u Ameriku. Gospodin Mitchell bi vam pomogao. Znam da bi. Garantirao bi za vas, za vizu, ako bi ga ja zamolila."

„A Odile? Jel' bi gospodin Mitchell garantirao i za Odile?"

Pogledala ga je zaprepašteno. Kad Felix bude imao dvadeset i pet godina, Odili će biti skoro četrdeset. Pa mora da je na to već pomislio? „I ona bi mogla otići," rekla je i dodala, „pretpostavljam."

„I šta bi radili u Americi?" Ljuljao se naprijed-nazad na petama, smiješeći se.

„Mogli bi raditi," rekla je oštro. Nije mogla a da ne doda, kao da ga ukorava, „bar jednom u životu."

„Kao kuhar i sluga," rekao je Felix pomno, i počeo se smijati. „Ne, nemojte se ljutiti," rekao je, pružajući joj ruku. „Američki papiri se tako dugo čekaju. Znam, radio sam to. Sjediti i čekati tamo po cijeli dan, ili stajati u redu – kako bi to Odile mogla? Ima svoj posao na koji mora paziti. Mora pomagati porodici."

„U Americi," rekla je Carol, „ bi više zarađivala, još više bi im mogla pomoći." No nije si mogla jasno predočiti sliku Felixa i Odile kako u urednom stančiću spajaju svoje dvije plaće i vjerno predaju jedan dio u Francusku. Nije mogla zamisliti što bi to na ovom svijetu Felix mogao raditi. Možda bi se njih dvoje vjenčali; nešto joj je govorilo da ne bi. „Ispričavam se," rekla je. „To je stvarno vaša osobna stvar. Nisam trebala ništa reći." Odmaknula se, no Felix joj je uzeo ruku i držao ju.

„Imate tako dobre namjere," rekao je. „Odile je u pravu, da znate. Trebao sam poginuti, ili makar nestati. Nitko ne zna šta bi sa mnom, niti gdje pripadam. Što se tiče Odile, njenoj cijeloj porodici je prošao rok. Ali mi nismo – kako ono piše u Američkim novinama, ispod slika? – 'Sretni Europljani pronašli novi život daleko od starih briga.' Nismo mi to."

„Pa valjda. Ne znam." Odjednom je shvatila kako apsurdno mora da izgledaju, stojeći ispod pruge Métroa, držeći se za ruke. Prolaznici su ih pogledavali sa simpatijama.

„Nije dobro da ovako odete, dok izgledate tako povrijeđeno i ozbiljno," rekao je. „Tako ste dobri. Imate tako dobre namjere. Odile vas voli."

Srce joj je skočilo kao da je rekao da ju on, Felix, voli. Ali ne, ispravila se. Ne on već neki drugi muškarac, neka divna osoba koja ne postoji.

Odile ju voli. Sa svojom rukom u njegovoj, sjetila se kako je poljubio Odilin dlan i osjetila na vlastitom dlanu pritisak poljupca; ali ne od Felixa. Pomislila je da je možda to što je osjetila bila težina Felixove ljubavi za Odile, iz koje je ona sama bila isključena i prema kojoj ju je Felix sad uljudno i s dobrotom htio privući, kao da je njegova i Odilina sposobnost da vole bila i njihova jedina gostoljubivost, jedini način plaćanja dugova. Na trenutak, stojeći ispod bučnih vlakova na mračnom, prašnjavom bulevaru, osjetila je da je konačno otvorila prava vrata, skrenula u pravu ulicu, privirila dio vizije za kojom je patila u zimskim večerima kada je, stojeći na stubištu, željela biti očarana Parizom i zaljubljena u Howarda.

Ali da je ta vizija mogla poteći od Felixa i Odile je bilo nemoguće. Na trenutak je bila blizu suzama, kao one božićne večeri kad je našla grančicu imele. No, na vrijeme se sjetila što je Felix – beznadni parazit. A Odile je bila smiješna i nemoralna i dovoljno stara da bi imala više pameti. I nisu bili ni vjenčani, niti će ikada biti, i provodili su Bog sam zna koliko sati u toj groznoj sobi u klošarskom dijelu Pariza.

Ne, pomislila je. To što imaju ona i Howard je bolje. U njih nitko nije mogao uperiti prst, ili ih kritizirati, ili ih poniziti nudeći im pomoć.

Povukla je ruku i s hladnom sramežljivošću rekla, „Hvala za kavu Felixe."

„A to." Promatrao ju je kako se penje stepenicama do Métroa, i onda je otišao.

Gore, prošla je kraj prodavača cvijeća i stala kupiti kiticu ljubičica, makar je znala da će uvenuti i prije nego stigne kući. Željela je imati nešto lijepo u ruci da time udalji sjećanje na onu sobu i Arape i sumorne kafiće i Felixov i Odilin neuredan život. Platila je za ljubičice i primijetila dok je to radila da taj mali prizor – prihvaćanje cvijeća, plaćanje za njega – ima onaj nježan, nostalgičan obris nečega iz prošlosti.

Predosjetila je da će se ona utješna vizija Pariza kakvim ga je jednom zamišljala uskoro preklopiti sa stvarnošću. To što je tamo upoznala i udala se za Howarda će s vremenom zvučati sve više i više interesantno i romantično. Zaboraviti će kišu i svoju s nikim podijeljenu zbunjenost i usamljenost, i umjesto toga sjećati će se Pariza iz filmova, uličnih svjetiljki sa blistavim ledenicama, smiješne koncertne dvorane u kojoj se srušio strop, i konačno će postojati jedna suvisla slika, točna ali neistinita. Sjećanje na Felixa i Odile i svu njihovu neugodnu čudnost će se odšuljati; ponovo će kad pomisli 'ljubav' pomisliti na Pariz, i, nakon određenog doba, sretno udana, milostivo udaljena od tog vremena, sjećat će se i opisivati ga, i na kraju i vjerovati, da je onakvo kakvo nikad nije bilo.

„U prolazu“

Kad je Cookova grupa od dvadeset i pet japanskih turista otputovala za Oslo, u čekaonici Helsinkijeve zračne luke ostalo je samo četvoro ljudi – mladi francuski par imena Perrigny, tek kratko vrijeme u braku, i stariji par, očiti Amerikanci. Starci su, kad su se uvjerili da ih mladi ljudi dvije klupe ispred njih ne mogu razumjeti, nastavili sa stalnom, tekućom prepirkom. Muškarac je imao naviku naglas čitati znakove, iako je moguće da je to činio samo da bi izluđivao ženu. Pročitao je znakove iznad troja vrata koja su vodila van na poljanu: „'Oslo.' 'Amsterdam.' 'Kopenhagen.'...Ne vidim 'Štokholm.'“

Ona je uzvratila, „Mene zanima što sam ja tebi značila sve ove godine.“

Philippe Perrigny, koji je razumio Engleski, se okrenuo i pravio da gleda u Finsko lončarsko posuđe izloženo njima s desna. Vidio je da muškarac proučava redove vožnje, neprestano mrmljajući „Štokholm, Štokholm,“ dok žena odvraća pogled. Ona je skinula naočale te brisala oči. Kako je došla do tog pitanja tu, u zračnoj luci Helsinkija, i kako on može odgovoriti? Odgovoriti se mora riječju: sve / ništa. Bilo je to kao naći se u seoskoj crkvi kad mjesni svećenik najednom postavi pitanje koje nikom nije stalo da razmotri, o grijehu ili dužnosti ili Božjem prisustvu, te izdahnuti s olakšanjem kad svrši s tim i pređe na molitvu.

„Na drugom svijetu ćemo drugačije birati,“ rekao je muškarac. „Barem znam da ti hoćeš.“

Uzburkane misli mladog muškarca su bile: okovani su do kraja ovog života. Prestari da bi se promijenili? Samo nečovjek bi ju sada ostavio? Hodaju prema vratima označenima „Amsterdam“ i ona šepa. Zato se ne mogu razići; ona je invalid. On se godinama brine o njoj. Šta god da im piše na kartama, oni prolaze kroz vrata za Amsterdam. Bez obzira kroz koja vrata izašli, ugledati će kružeće ulice predgrađa, obiteljski auto ispred svake kuće, a u stražnjem dvorištu plavi bazen. Širom cijele sjeverne Europe ulice su dobile imena po drvećima bagrema, no oni to možda ne znaju.

Perrigny je bio na bračnom putovanju, ali i na zadatku za svoje pariške novine, te je u glavi sklapao serijal o Skandinaviji. Jedan članak, naslovljen „Nijemi krik,“ je ponavljao sad već četiri godine, no ni on sam niti njegove novine nisu uvidjeli da se ponavlja. Opet je počeo smišljati, u stilu pariških tjednika: „Bio je to mučan, nijemi krik iščupan iz grlâ i srcâ...“ Ne. „Bila je to nijema pjesma, ugušena...“ „Bila je to žarka, nijema himna za...“ Ovaj put će se taj početak pridružiti plavookom, puritanskom Sjeveru; a bio se odnosio na Bretonske poljoprivrednike kad nisu mogli dobiti dobru cijenu za svoje artičoke, na Božićnu gomilu kod Berlinskog zida, na Grčku, oskvrnutu turistima, na glazbenike, crnce, koji nastupaju u glazbenoj dvorani Olympia, na nesretne ribare Portugalce, prokrijumčarene u Francusku i istovarene na tržište rada, na pjesnike koji pišu pod utjecajem droga.

Starac je uzeo svoju ženu za ruku. Još uvijek je bila okrenuta od njega, no sada suhih očiju, i pod zaštitom naočala. Da bi joj skrenuo pažnju dok su im pregledavali karte, hitro je rekao, „Pogledaj ovaj fini restoran, zgodan restoran. Dijelom je unutra, a dijelom vani, vidiš? I unutra je *i* vani.“

Perrignyijeva nova žena je nježno povukla svoju ruku iz njegove i rekla, „Zašto si ju ostavio?“

On je ovo već bio iščekivao, i rekao, „Zato što se nije mogla skoncentrirati na jednu osobu. Prema svima je bila dobra, ali se nije mogla dovoljno skoncentrirati za brak.“

„Bila je nevjerna.“

„I to. To je bilo od tog istog manjka koncentracije. Već je bila udavana.“

„Da? Bila je stara?“

„Sada joj je dvadeset i sedam. Bojala se imati dvadeset i sedam. Imala je običaj citirati nešto od Jane Austen – Engleske spisateljice,“ rekao je kad se Claire namrštila. „Nešto kako se žena te dobi ničemu više neće imati nadati. Pitam se čemu se ona nadala.“

„I prvi muž ju je ostavio?“

„Ne, umro je. Nisu bili dugo u braku.“

„Ti ju jesi ostavio?“ rekla je djevojka, iz straha od mogućeg poniženja – iz straha da se možda udala za čovjeka kojega je neka druga žena odbacila.

„Itekako da jesam. Bez objašnjavanja. Jednu nedjelju u jutro, ustao sam se, obukao i otišao. Vratio sam se kad nje nije bilo i odnijeo svoje stvari – magnetofon, ploče. Dva puta sam se vraćao po knjige. Nisam ju ni jednom više vidio, osim da bi razgovarali o rastavi.“

„Zar nisi bio nesretan, odšetatavši samo na takav način? Po tebi to ispada tako jednostavno.“

„Ne divim se patnji,“ rekao je, i prepoznao da je to odjek njegove prve žene. Njoj je patnja bila odvratna; obilježje prostote je bio netko kao Kafka, sam u sobi, kako pretače strahove i udarce.

„Nitko se ne divi patnji," rekla je djevojka, misleći na grčeve i bolove. „Imala je smiješno ime."

„Da, grozno. Shirley. Uvijek ga je morala slovkati preko telefona. Suzanne Henri Irma Robert Louise Émile Yvonne. Ne izgovara se kako se piše."

„Da li si stvarno bio zaljubljen u nju?"

„Jesam kad sam ju prvi put vidio. Greška je bila u tome što sam je oženio. Zagonetka je zašto sam je uopće oženio."

„Je li bila lijepa?"

„Imala je lijepu kosu, kao sve Amerikanke, ali ju je stalno šišala i poružnjavala. Imala je dobre noge, ali je nosila ravne cipele. Kao i svi Amerikanci, nosila je odjeću tek malkice predugačku, te s tim ravnim cipelama. . .nikad nije izgledala spremljeno. Bila je slijepa kao krtica i nosila tamne naočale jer je druge izgubila. Ponekad, kad bi skinula naočale, izgledala bi okrutno. No bila je nagla, i puna brige, i smatrala je da su je muškarci uvijek iskorištavali."

Claire je rekla, „Otkud ja znam da nećeš i mene ostaviti?" no po njenom tonu je znao da ne očekuje da joj na to odgovori.

Prozvali su njihov let. Izašli su pod „Kopenhagenom," noseći svoje foto aparate i kabanice. Bilo mu je drago što je ovaj prvi dio putovanja završen. On i Claire su proveli cijela dvadeset i četiri sata zajedno. Bilo je u redu ako bi joj rekao da radi, no kad je čitao bila je zbunjena i uvrijeđena. Griješio je u ukazanim joj pažnjama. U Helsinkiju je išao s njom u kupovinu odjeće. Između izvješenih haljina vidio joj je noge i bosa stopala. Izašla je smiješeći se, držeći pred sobom žarku haljinu pokrivenu suncima. „Ne možeš to nositi u Parizu," rekao je, i vidio kako joj se lice promijenilo, kao da je zasjenio neku njenu ideju o samoj sebi. Jučer, u parku, pored visokog mlaza vode, našao se zagledan u drugu djevojku, koja je sjedila hraneći vjeverice. Divio se njenom zatiljku, mekom razdjeljku njene kose, smeđem ramenu i ruci. Besposlenosti ove vrste nikad nije bilo u onome što je on odabrao smatrati stvarnim životom – kao da su ljubav i putovanje bili suprotni životu, bili san. Približio se svojoj novoj ženi, tom plavom ljetnom djetetu, misleći na medeni mjesec, po zimi, sa svojom prvom ženom. Čitao joj iz dlana da joj skrene pažnju od hladnoće i kiše; držao je dlan-list, pratio iznimno plitku liniju glave (nedostatak prosuđivanja, obavijestio ju je) i isprekidanu životnu liniju – Američki život, bio je rekao, složivši list. Sada je podario pažnju Claire, jer se bio divio drugoj djevojci i sjetio nečeg lijepog sa svojom prvom ženom, sve to u minuti. Da li bi Claire voljela pomoći mu u radu, rekao je. Zajedno su gledali u izloge koliko stvari koštaju, te mu je ona zapisala koliko su platili za obrok od pržene ribe i lakog piva. Svaki dan se morao ispuniti kao nikad kod kuće. Imati prazninu od dva sata u nepoznatom gradu, u prolazu, bilo je kao biti zatvoren u zaglavljenom dizalu i ne imati ništa za čitati.

Claire bi bila dala sve da može biti ta djevojka u parku, da ima taj vrat i tu kosu, te da se, istovremeno, može odmaknuti i vidjeti to sa distance. Opazila je štovanje koje je on ukazao njezinim malim ušima, prilijepljenim resicama. Osvetu je dobila u luci, kasnije, kad ju je velika grupa turista zamijenila za nekog slavnog – za glumicu, pretpostavljala je. Ljudi su joj inače govorili da liči na Catherine Deneuve. Pružali su joj razglednice i papire, a ona je potpisivala svoje novo ime, „Claire Perrigny," „Claire Perrigny," osvrčući se prema njemu sa sretnim pobjedničkim očima. Sve oko njih je letilo i skričalo – galebovi, vjetar, stranci koji su vikali na nepoznatom jeziku nešto što je ona uzela da znači „Vaše ime, vaše ime!"

„Oni misle da sam slavna!" doviknula je, kroz svoju gustu leteću kosu. Smiješila se široko i zavjernički, jer uopće nije bila slavna, samo jedna lijepa djevojka udana tek osam dana. Jezik joj je bio taman od borovnica koje je pojela na tržnici – dok joj Philippe nije rekao, nije znala što su borovnice. Smiješila se svojim obojanim smiješkom i pokušavala uhvatiti svoju leteću suknju između koljena. On je, pak, osjećao sažaljenje, ponos, nježnost, ljubomoru, i oštar, mučan jad. Sad je vidio kako je izgledala njegova prva žena, prije nego što ju je on ikad poznavao, kad je bila mlada i zaljubljena.

„S oblaka na oblak“

Raymonda je njegova porodica doživljavala kao dugačko putovanje željeznicom, sa neprestano mijenjajućim uglom promatranja. Mama i tetka su mu bile od generacije za koju su putovanja predstavljala vlakove – spore puteve tamo i nazad, preokupiranost jelom, ili partijom karata sa neznancima, koju bi prekinuo bljesak nebeskog svjetla sa smrznute i suncem obasjane rijeke Saint Lawrence. Onda, s prilazom Montrealu, tamno-smeđe sirotinjske četvrti, signal da se prtljaga skine s polica.

Da se kratka priča skrati, njegova tetka Berthe (ona je radila u uredu punom engleskih Kanađana) bi rekla da je Raymond raj i pakao. Majka i tetka, te dvije sestre su mislile da nikad ne bi mogle nekog voljeti više od Raymonda; onda se, najednom, on svojoj tetki učinio toliko dosljedno nesavršen, toliko nepokolebljiv u svojim promašajima, da su promjenljive mogućnosti njegovih raspoloženja, odluka, potreba, života, sve prestale privlačiti njezinu pažnju.

Oca je imao, naravno – imao ga do osamnaeste godine, iako je Raymondov običaj bio gunđati da su ga – loše – odgojile žene. Posljednje sjećanje na oca mu je svakako moralo biti Louis kako umire od emfizeme, uspravan u bijelo-obojanoj pletenoj stolici, dok na žarećem i zabranjenom mu suncu mrcvari zabranjenu mu cigaru. Djelomično popločeno stražnje dvorište nije imalo hlada – samo dva žuto-obrubljena suncobrana koja su filtrirala srpanjsko plavetnilo i činila ga žučljivim. Louis nije mogao sjediti u njihovoj lažnoj sjeni, govorio je da se od nje znoji. Iza tih kišobrana je bio kuhinjski ulaz u dvojno prebivalište od žbuke i cigle, u stilu kasnih četrdesetih – kocka sa lakiranim vratima – na sjevernom kraju bulevara Pija Devetog. Louis je rekao,

„Zapamti da je tvoj otac posjedovao svoju vlastitu kuću;“ kao i, „Kad smo se tek tu doselili, još su se mogla vidjeti prazna zemljišta. To je deprimiralo tvoju majku. Nije bila naviknuta na otvoren pogled.“

Tamo gdje je nekad bio Raymondov sanduk za pijesak stajala je granitna ptičja fontana sa tri aluminijske ptice veličine golubova napréene na rubu – poklon od Louisove firme kad je morao, jer je bio toliko bolestan, otići u ranu mirovinu. Zlatni sat je već imao. Raymondu je rekao točno gdje u njegovom radnom stolu će naći sat – u kojoj ladici. Raymond je sjedio na travi prekriženih nogu i vježbao prevrtanje u zraku noža za povrće; komando bodež mu je mama bila pronašla i uklonila. Njegov otac je mogao udahnuti zrak ali je morao napraviti stanku prije nego što će progovoriti. Čekajući da mu dođe snaga, pogledao je gore prema nebu, prema mjesecu, blijedom i prozirnom, u sunčevom svjetlu – sjećanje na desetke drugih iščezavajućih mjeseca. (Bilo je to ljeto prve šetnje po mjesecu. Raymondova mama to još uvijek spominje, kao da je izvršilo valni utjecaj na događaje u njenom životu).

Nijeme stanke, gore upiljen pogled, ostavili su dojam da Louis priziva božju pomoć. U stvari, znao je što sve želi reći. Kao i Raymond. Raymond mu je – ni njegova tetka to neće poreći – ukazao poštovanje. Nijednom nije napomenuo, „Ovo sam već čuo,“ niti izgovorio onaj vječan, užurban odbrus mladih, „Znam, znam, *znam.*“

Njegov otac je rekao, „U Bostonu je uvijek bilo dobrih poslova,“ „Nikad nemoj zaboraviti francuski, to bi tvojoj mami slomilo srce,“ „Jednog od ovih dana ćeš se morati ošišati,“ „Oženi katolkinju, ali ne bilo koju,“ „S imenom kakvo je Raymond Joseph Driscoll možeš otići bilo gdje u svijetu,“ „Onaj moj album autografa vrijedi zlata. Čuvaj ga. Uvijek će te izvući iz škripca.“

Za svog života, Louis je pisao hokejašima i filmskim zvjezdama i lokalnim političarima, te vrlo često primio odgovor na uzvrat. Raymond ga je kao dijete gledao kako izrezuje potpis i lijepi ga u duboko-plavu, kožom okoričenu knjigu. Sad kad je Raymond nastanjen u Floridi i pokušava izgraditi karijeru u poslovanju motelima, čitav život mu je škripac. Teško mu je povjerovati da album ništa ne vrijedi. Nažalost, tako je. Većina potpisa su bile kopije, ili ih je na brzinu naškrabala sekretarica. Onih nekoliko autentičnih autografa je bilo od imena suviše nepoznatih da bi vrijedila. Pola tuceta koje je Louis kupio od specijaliziranog obrtnika na Peel Streetu, koji je od onda bio prisiljen zatvoriti, su bile ovjerene krivotvorine. Louis je držao „Joseph Stalin" i „Harry S. Truman" u zaključanoj ladici, govoreći Marie, svojoj ženi, da ako jedna od te dvije velike sile, ili obe odjednom, ikad okupiraju Kanadu, ona će trampom moći doći do sigurnosti.

Raymond je imao tanku grivu crvenosmeđe kose koja mu je pokrila profil kad se sagnuo da pokupi nož. Nosio je cirkusnu rodeo opremu, srebrno i bijelo. Louis očima nije mogao vidjeti sinovu odjeću; u mrzovolji umiranja nešto od nje je razdijelio. Raymond je svoje omiljene kombinacije odjeće čuvao kod tetke. Ona je živjela u stanu na drugom katu male zgrade – s balkonima sprijeda i odozada, dugačkim, prohladnim hodnikom, tri spavaće sobe – na zapadnoj strani parka Lafontaine. Bila je neudana i nije joj trebao sav taj prostor; uživala je samo šetajući iz sobe u sobu. Louis je s Raymondom pričao engleski, da bi ovaj bio sposoban probiti se u svijetu. Želio je da Raymond ide u englesku komercijalnu školu, gdje bi mogao upoznati ljude koji bi mu poslije koristili. Raymondova tetka je rekla da je njen engleski bolji od Louisovog: njegovo „th" se ponekad odkliznulo u „d." Louis je, dahtajući, spomenuo Raymondu da

Berthe, uz sve njezine pretenzije, nije toliko dobrostojeća po pitanju nekretnina kao sestra joj i šurjak, iako se činilo da ima više novaca za razbacivanje. „Niska stanarina u makar kojem bijednom kvartu – to je njen kredo," rekao je Raymondov otac. U svojim zadnjim, gadnim, gorkim danima, kao da se prepustio mračnim mislima o Berthi; uspoređivao je njenu karijeru sa svojom, rekao da ona ima urođenu žudnju da spava s oženjenim muškarcima. Ali prije nego što će umrijeti porekao je svaku riječ, rekao da mu je bila dobar prijatelj i da je primjer drugim ženama, iako ne u svakom slučaju i udanim ženama. Želio je da pazi na Marie i Raymonda – rekao je da ima osjećaj kao da iza sebe ostavlja, zajedno sa dva auta, vrijednim albumom autografa, zlatnim satom, i isplaćenom kućom, dvoje bespomoćne djece, jedno od osamnaest godina, drugo u četrdesetima.

Louis je također ostavio ručno ispisan nezgodan zahtjev da bude pokopan u New Brunswicku, odakle je potekao, umjesto u Montrealu. Raymondova mama je poruku sakrila iza naslonjača od divana, da bude otkrivena za vrijeme nekog budućeg opsežnog čišćenja. Da ju podere se nije mogla natjerati. Louisa su pokopali na groblju Notre Dame des Neiges, gdje mu se Marie namjeravala pridružiti, ne tako skoro. Za nadgrobnu ploču je naručila dvojezični natpis, jer je on u uredu govorio engleski a s njom francuski.

Raymond je u tim danima isto govorio i francuski i engleski, oba napuknuto. Njegov tip engleskog je spadao u pod-diviziju katoličkog Montreala – zvučao je malo kao Irski ali je bio tanji od bilo kojeg naglaska koji bi se mogao čuti u Dublinu. Njegov rječnik na francuskom je potekao iz razgovora s mamom i s tetkom, te je trebao biti pun nježnosti. Nije znao što želi biti. „Ako ikada budem pisao, napisati ću knjigu o obitelji,“ rekao je svojoj tetki na dan Louisovog sprovoda, gledajući rođake u crnoj neprirodnoj odjeći kako upijaju vrućinu. Bio je to prvi put da je to rekao, i najvjerovatnije zadnji. Jadni Raymond je jedva znao načrčkati slovo, nije znao spelovati. Nije mu smetalo da nešto nauči, ali je mrzio da ga se podučava. Nakon što je otišao od kuće, Berthe i Marie su jedva ikad imale njegov rukopis pred očima. Imale su njegov glas preko telefona, kad je zvao iz raznih mjesta u Americi (o Vijetnamu su mislile kao o mjestu u Americi), sa postepeno promijenjenim naglaskom. Francuski mu se napunio engleskim, kao talogom od kamenčića i pijeska, a na engleskom još nije postao potpuni stranac: čak godinama kasnije je i dalje izgovarao „palm“ da se rimuje sa „jam.“

Raymond se na sprovodu ponašao korektno, držao je maminu ruku, i brinuo se da svako s njom popriča, potičući tako one rođake koji ga nisu dobro poznavali da komentiraju da je isti otac. Bio je obučen u tamno odijelo, kupljeno na brzinu, i u jednu od Louisovih kravata. Kravatu nije bio nosio od zadnjeg porodičnog sprovoda; Berthe mu je morala pričvrstiti čvor. Dao joj je da mu blago podšiša kosu, tako da mu ne dodiruje ramena.

Marie nije htjela držati primanje: ožalošćeni su se morali zadovoljiti poljupcem ili rukovanjem pored otvorene grobnice. Tako su se Louisove relacije, od kojih su neki prešli velik put, vraćale kući sa krhotinama preloma bez mogućnosti pomirenja. Marie to nije bilo briga: njeni porodični osjećaji su se suzili na Raymonda i Berthe. Raymond je, nakon sprovoda, odvezao te dvije sestre u Berthin stan. Sjedio je s mamom za kuhinjskim stolom i gledao Berthe kako reže hladnu piletinu. Marie je ostala u svom šeširu sa sahrane, niskoj okrugloj kapi od crne slame sa pramenom od vela. Nitko nije puno pričao. Raymondu piletina nije bila dovoljna pa je Berthe izvadila šunku koju je priredila noć prije u slučaju da se Marie predomisli o pozivanju rodbine. Stavila ju je cijelu ispred njega, a on je cijepao komade i jeo ih prstima. Marie je rekla, jer je nešto morala reći, „Ne bi se usudio to raditi da te otac može vidjeti." I ona i Berthe su znale da se Raymond loše provodi.

Kad je završio, premjestili su se niz hodnik u Berthinu dnevnu sobu. Ona je otvorila vrata od oba balkona, da bi došao propuh. Ugrijani zrak je dotakao zadignutu bijelu zavjesu ne pomutivši na njoj ijedan nabor. Raymond je skinuo jaknu i kravatu. Žene su već bile skinule svoje crne najlon čarape. Poštovanje prema Louisu ih je sprečavalo da se do kraja raskomote. Nisu imale ništa posebno raditi u ostatku dana. Berthe je uzela slobodno u uredu, a Marie se bojala ići kući. Vjerovala je, da se ne baš duh ali neka Louisova srž, nalazi u njihovoj kući na bulevaru Pijata devetog, da isprobava brave, okreće ručke od vrata, klizom otvara ladice, barata jadnim, zbrkanim računima koje je Marie vodila za kućanstvo, i utvrđuje jednom i zauvijek točan iznos novca koji je Marie dužna Berthi. (Na Berthe se uvijek moglo računati za mali zajam pri kraju mjeseca. Pokazala je Marie kako da zapetlja račune, tako da Louis nikad ne sazna.)

Raymond se ispružio na Berthinoj blijedozelenoj sofi, sa gomilom jastučića pod glavom. „Raymonde, pazi gdje stavljaš noge," rekla mu je mama.

„Nema veze," rekla je Berthe. „Ne danas."

„Neću da poželiš da nismo tu," rekla je Marie. „Mislim, nakon što se uselimo. Nećeš ni znati da smo tu. Raymonde, zamoli tetku Berthe za pepeljaru."

„Ima jednu kraj sebe," rekla je Berthe.

„Neću dati Raymondu da stavlja noge svuda po namještaju," rekla je Marie. „Ne poslije danas. Ako nas ne želiš, imaš samo da kažeš."

„Već rekoh," rekla je Berthe, na čega je Raymond okrenuo glavu i pažljivo ju pogledao.

Suze su preplavile Marieine oči pri nevjerojatnoj viziji Berthe kako naređuje svojoj najbližoj rodbini, novo-ožalošćenoj, da se spakuje i pokupi. „Bit ćemo sretni, jer volimo jedno drugo," rekla je.

„Jel' si pitala Raymonda gdje on želi živjeti?" rekla je Berthe.

„Raymond želi ono što želi njegova mama," rekla je Marie. „Bit će dobar. Obećajem. Iznosit će smeće. Jel' da da hoćeš? Svako veče ćeš iznositi smeće za svoju tetku Berthe?"

„Ne svako veče," rekla je njegova tetka. „Dva put tjedno. Nemoj plakati. Louis te ne bi volio vidjeti u suzama."

Trnak sramežljivosti je dotakao svih troje. Louis im se vratio u sjećanje u ruhu superiornosti, nudeći vodstvo, savjete. „Papi ne bi smetalo da gledamo vijesti," rekao je Raymond.

Bili su zagledani kraće od minute u ljuljajući tepih džunglovskog zelenila, snimljen iz helikoptera, i slušali glas na francuskom sa Montrealskim naglaskom, kako opisuje zbivanja u mjestu koje sestre nisu namjeravale ikad posjetiti. Raymond je preskočio na engleski kanal, bez pitanja da li kome smeta. On je sad bio muška glava kuće; uostalom, uvijek su mu popuštale. Na engleskom se Vijetnam doimao čvrsto prizemljenim, sa kanadskim narednikom u mornarici - oštriganim, podšišanim, sivookim, opuštenim. Obraćao se Raymondu, govoreći da se Kanađanin može prijaviti u stranu vojsku.

„Koga briga?“ rekla je, sudbonosno, Marie. Engleski na televiziji ju je uvijek uspavljivao. Ispružila se u fotelji i počela vrlo blago hrkati. Berthe joj je skinula naočale i šešir, i čipkanim pokrivačem joj pokrila gole noge. I u najtoplijem vremenu, Marie se znala probuditi nahlađena i nevoljena. Lako je padala u nesvijest; po njenom shvaćanju, krv joj se zgrušavala u rukama i nogama, te ostavljala mozak nezbrinutim. Činila se zadovoljna ovim objašnjenjem i drugo nije tražila.

Raymond se ustao, srušivši hrpu jastučića. Skupio je kosu na vrhu glave i tako ju držao. „Pošalju te u San Diego,“ rekao je. Što je on, zapravo, zamišljao? Pacifički surf? Paradu na suncu? Berthe ga je trebala pitati.

Kad je Marie došla sebi, zijevajući i uzdišući, Berthe je lakirala nokte (boju je bila skinula za sahranu), a Raymond je jeo tortu od čokolade, i gledao Roda Lavera. Skinuo je košulju, cipele, i čarape. „Laver je najveći čovjek modernog doba,“ rekao je.

„Joj, Raymonde,“ rekla mu je mama. „Već si zaboravio svog oca.“

Kako je Marie i obećala, iznijeo je smeće, ostavivši dobar dojam na portugalsku obitelj koja je živjela ispod Berthe. (Louis, koji je odbijao razgovarati sa strancima, nije uopće ostavio dojam.) Sljedećeg jutra u pet sati, Berthin je susjed, na nogama jer je imao ranu dostavu u svojoj voćarni, vidio Raymonda kako ubacuje veliku platnenu torbu u mamin auto, i odlazi. Kosa mu je bila zavezana bijelim kožnim remenom. Nosio je bijele čizme i (imao na sebi) jedno od svojih rodeo odijela.

Prije nego što će otići iz Berthinog stana prevrpao je njenu torbicu, zaboravljenu na kuhinjskoj stolici – cijelo stoljeće ranije, kad su se okupili za pogrebnu gozbu. Prije nego što će otići iz Montreala, napravio je dugi obilazak da bi se oprostio sa svojom starom kućom. Nije se bojao duhova, i već je bio izumio oca koji će mu odobravati sve što napravi. U Louisovom radnom stolu je našao zlatni sat i jedan ili dva dokumenta za koje je znao da će mu trebati – među njima i rodni list koji pokazuje da mu je osamnaest godina. Kao zadnji dojam ponijeo je sa sobom požutjelu travu u stražnjem dvorištu. Ništa nije bilo zalivano od Louisove smrti.

Berthe se često pitala što su Marinci u uredu za novačenje dolje u Plattsburghu mislili o Raymondu, svom u bijelom i srebru, sa onom visećom kosom boje prašine od cigle, i tankim, napuknutim engleskim govorom. Vjerovatno, ništa: sigurno su i očekivali od civila da sliče lažnim izvođačima. Uvijek se netko iz Montreala dovlačio dolje. Bilo je to kao prijaviti se u Legiju Stranaca. Kad se prvi put javio telefonom, Berthe je rekla Marie, „Bar znamo gdje je," no nije bilo tako; nikada nisu zapravo znale. Nije otišao u San Diego: vojno pravilo o zemljopisu dijeli kontinent. Prijavio se s istočne strane rijeke Mississippi, tako da su ga na obuku poslali na otok Parris. Onaj kanadski Marinac je tu mogućnost zaboravio spomenuti. Berthe je nakupovala cestovnih mapa da bi mogla pronaći ove nove nazive. Kako se činilo, rijeka Mississippi je kao ukopana prestajala teći u Minneapolisu. S Kanadom nije imala nikakve veze. Raymond je trebao okrenuti auto i doći kući. (Umjesto toga, ostavio ga je parkiranog u Plattsburghu. Kasnije se nije mogao sjetiti imena ulice.)

Nikad se više nije vratio. Izgovor mu je prije bio da nema gdje prespavati u Montrealu. Marie je bila prodala dvojnu kuću i uselila se kod Berthe. Standardna motelska soba je bila zadnje što je želio vidjeti na godišnjem odmoru, a znao je da ga Berthe ne bi držala u kući.

Unovačio se na četiri godine, onda na još tri. Marie je na njega gledala kao na zatvorenika, kao da će s vremenom biti pušten. Pušten časno? Da, jer inače mu ne bi dali da se nastani na Floridi: sedamdeset i šeste je još uvijek bio Kanađanin; lako su ga mogli deportirati. Kad je postao američki državljanin i nazvao Marie, očekujući čestitke, ona mu je rekla da Amerikanci započinju devedeset i osam posto svjetskih šumskih požara. To je bilo jedino čega se mogla sjetiti. On je od onda tamo ostao, krečući se kao klatno između sjevernog Hollywooda i Hollywood Beacha, između Fort Lauderdala i poteza Miamija poznatog kao Mali Quebec, po broju francuskih Kanađana koji tamo provode godišnji odmor. Imaju svoje novine, svoju radio postaju i televizijski kanal, i uvoze montrealski roštilj. Ponekad ga zvuk njihovih glasova iritira; ponekad mu stvara nostalgiju za domom i za ljetom šezdeset i devete, za lakoćom s kojom je preskakao s oblaka na oblak.

Marie još uvijek vjeruje da je „otok Parris“ bila jedna od Raymondovih čuvenih grešaka u pisanju. Mora da je dio svoje rane mladosti, onaj najmanje poznat, proveo u mjestu koje se zove Paris, Južna Karolina. Često se pita o drugim majkama i sinovima, te da li djeca ikad osjete išta od boli koju nanose. Berthe misli o tome kako lako mora da je Raymondu bilo otići – tek-izašlo sunce je ukošeno sjalo po sporednim ulicama, tu i tamo kućne stepenice su bile tamne, poškropljene vodom, a nebo još nije postalo usijano staklo. Mora da je pretpostavljao da će mu i ostatak života biti takav. Kad su ona i Marie izvrnule kuću na bulevaru Pijata devetog, tražeći neki trag, zamišljajući da je ostavio pismo, ostavio malo ljubavi, zavjese su ostavile zagrnute, kao da je u tim sobama još nečija prisutnost, umorna od svjetla.

„Stanje stvari“

Na račun svojih poodmaklih godina te manjka bliske rodbine, M. Wroblewski prima malo osobne pošte. Većina njegovih prijatelja iz mladosti u Varšavi su umrli, a preživjeli nemaju puno za ispričati, osim o svojim unucima – a pišući o potpunim neznancima se ne može dugo dopisivati. I sami bake i djedovi ih poznaju jedino po fotografijama u boji, ili po kričavim, stidljivim glasovima preko telefona. Jedva nešto progovore na Poljskom, i imaju imena engleskog zvuka: roditelji su im emigrirali što su prije mogli. Žena M. Wroblewskog ima nećakinju u Canberri: Teresa, žena od Stanleya, majka Fione i Tima. Njihove slike drži pohranjene u velikim smeđim kuvertama. Ako se Teresa i njezina obitelj ikad odluče posjetiti Pariz, on će njihova vedra lica raširiti po cijelom stanu.

Moglo bi se pomisliti da će promijenjeni uvjeti u Istočnoj Europi uzburkati malo nade u novosti iz Varšave, no njegovi dopisnici, tih par što ih je ostalo, zvuče obeshrabreno, sumnjičavo. Sve je preskupo. Mladež je neobrazovana i nepristojna. Govorni jezik je unakažen. Torbice se otimaju pred crkvama. Nema knjiga vrijednih čitanja – ništa do pornografije i Zapadnog smeća u prevodu. Nedavno, prijatelj kojeg nije vidio pedeset godina ali s kojim je ostao u kontaktu, mu je poslao dugačko pismo. Taj prijatelj je bio pozvan u radio emisiju da opiše svoje iskustvo u ratnom getou. Rezultat je bio da su mu slane poruke s psovkama i uvredama. Bila je čak i jedna prijetnja smrću. On je starac. Što je previše previše je. „Po tom pitanju, ništa se nije promijenilo,“ napisao je. „To je u glavi, u krvi i kostima. Time ne mislim na tebe. Ti si uvijek bio drugačiji.“

Kompliment, da, no nitko ne želi biti izdvojen, testiran, pregledan, proglašen iznimkom. „Time ne mislim na tebe“ vodi do neugodnosti i bolnih osjećaja. Možda je M. Wroblewski, davno, kao mladić, neiskusan i iskren, istu stvar bio rekao svom prijatelju: „Naravno, ti si sasvim nešto drugo. Pričam o svima ostalima.“ Je li moguće da je to rekao? Voljeo bi da prijatelju može poslati zrakoplovnu kartu za Pariz, naći mu udobnu sobu i diskretno se pobrinuti za račun, te ga pozvati na večeru: M. Wroblewski, njegov prijatelj i Magda, oko stolića u dnevnoj sobi, sa blistajućom zelenom svjetiljkom i navučenim zelenim zastorima; ili kod Chez Marcela, gdje je običavao ići s Magdom. Vlasnik bi ih se sjetio, ponudio besplatan konjak uz kavu: veseo, velikodušan, susretljiv – Jedna Europa, Jedan Svijet.

Eto, vidiš, rekao bi M. Wroblewski svom prijatelju. Kroz pukotine se nazire svjetlo.

Ova jesen je mlaka, blaga i vlažna. U stankama između pljuskova široki bulevari se napune ljudima u šetnji, kao da je ljeto. On sjedi u Atelieru, novom mjestu odmah pored Selecta, sastavljajući pa odbacujući odgovor svome prijatelju. Štap i šešir su mu na stolici; pod njom leži njegov poslušan pas. Atelier se otvorio u osamdesetim godinama, no on još o njemu misli kao o „onom novom mjestu.“ Izgleda kao da se u Montparnasseu nalazilo oduvijek. Stolni prostirači prikazuju modela u zrelim godinama, kako pozira učenicima ljudske forme prije otprilike tri generacije. Novine vise na drvenim drškama, po starinski način. Konobari su strpljivi, osim kad mušterijinu reakciju na kavu prolivenu u tanjuriću protumače kao uvredu. Preko puta, zidovi od ogledala od zgrade koja se sada uzdiže iznad Coupole, odražavaju nebo regije Île-de-France: vodeno plavetnilo sa tankom gazom od oblaka. Ako sjednete za stol u prednjem redu, moguće je da će vas gnjaviti prosjaci, stranci, neki od njih djeca. M. Wroblewski u džepovima drži sitniš koji dijeli dok ga ne nestane. Mnogi novinski članci su ga upozorili da to ne čini: taj novac se skuplja za nečovječne i cinične muškarce koji su tu djecu poslali na ulicu.

Njegov prijatelj u Varšavi je potpuno svjestan, sa zapanjujućim pamćenjem za događaje – rasvrstane, po redu. Da je ovog trenutka tu, za sve bi našao povijesni kontekst: za novu zgradu i njena ogledala, za golog modela, za djevojčicu prosjakinju sa/s njenom dugačkom pletenicom i točkicom od dijamanta u nosnici. Tko bi mogao, nakon što na radiju čuje glas jednog starca, sjesti i sastaviti prijeteće pismo? M. Wroblewski si može predočiti samo zgurena ramena tog čovjeka, potiljak njegovog debelog vrata. Ali, ne, možda bi rekao njegov prijatelj: vidio sam mu lice, tanko je i elegantno. Čemu da se još nadaš? Šta još možeš očekivati? Toliko o tvom svjetlu kroz pukotine.

I tako bi razmjenjivali vizije, preko poslijepodneva pa u noć, dok bi svjetla u kafféu sjala sve jače i jače, a vani se drveća stapala s noću. Možda bi njegovom prijatelju bilo drago upoznati nekog sasvim novog, udaljenog od mračne zagonetke onog čovjeka i prijetećeg pisma. Nažalost, većina M. Wroblewskijevih poznanika u Parizu je nestala, ili se odselila u udaljene gradove i predgrađa (sve se čini daleko), ili se povukla u dio uma koji mora da je poput iskrivljene, šuplje čahure. Kad ženi čita pismo iz Canberre, pazi da prevede engleske izraze koje Teresa redovno ubacuje. Magda je prije razumjela engleski, no sada joj se čak i francuski gubi. Prije nego on dođe do kraja pisma, ona će četiri ili pet puta pitati, „Od koga je?“ – iako joj je pokazao i potpis, i vesele australske markice. Ili će ga možda iznenaditi umjesnim pitanjem: „Hoće li doći kući za Božić?" Što za Magdu znači kuća, ne može se razaznati. Ona ga može pitati „Da li se ti sviđaš mome ocu?" ili, čak, „Gdje ti živiš?"

Koristi njegovo ime od milja, kaže „Maciek i ja," ali o njemu ne zna ništa. Može odigrati partiju karata, napisati pismo – kome, to nikad nije jasno – ali on se pravi da mu lijepi markice i nosi ga na poštu. Dok on izmisli prihvatljivu adresu, ta situacija se otopila. Ona bulji u kuvertu. O čemu on to priča? Uhvaćena je u trenutku između svjetla i tame, kad se zadnji san zore brzo raspada, a svijest o jutru se tek primila. U tom djeliću sekunde ona živi cijeli dan.

Ovog jutra, kad joj je na poslužavniku donijeo doručak, našao je novo pismo zalutalo na tepihu. Rukopis joj je krupniji nego prije, lako se čita:

> Moja najdraža draga!
>
> Maciek je učitelj a i ja sam isto! U poljskoj srednjoj školi u Parizu! On predaje francuski. Je predajem algebru i glazbeni. Naši učenici se lijepo ponašaju. Imamo Nansen putovnice! Otvaraju se široko, kao harmonike. Samo nekoliko sretnika smije imati Nansen putovnice! Jako su stare! Samo ih nekoliko ljudi može imati. Maciek predaje francuski.
>
> Voli te tvoja
>
> Magda

Sve u pismu je istina, ako zamisliš da se današnji dan odvija prije nekih četrdeset i pet godina. Rekao je, „Baš fino pismo. Da li je za Teresu?"

Ispravila se u krevetu, prihvatila čaj. „Što je Prusija?"

Pitanje o Prusiji je novo. Možda je u jednom raspadnutom snu netko viknuo „Prusija!" glasom iz snova koji riječi i imena pretvara u dramatične potvrde. Pogledala je prema prozoru, pijuckala čaj. Mogla je vidjeti (ako je upijala stvari) veliku garažu na uglu i barem jedno od drveća na Bulevaru Raspail.

„Posjekli su neka drveća," primijetila je nedavno, šetajući s njim po susjedstvu. Bila je u pravu: on je bio taj kojemu se promakle novonastale rupe, iako tim bulevarom prolazi svakog dana svog života.

Ako ne pokušavaš s njom održati živ razgovor, ništa se ne primjećuje. Kad ju popodne izvede na čaj i krišku voćne torte, izgleda bolje i samopouzdanije od većine starica za drugim stolovima. One prave nered od mrvica, korama od pite hrane svoje neposlušne pse, gnjave konobare pitanjima koja se isto toliko dosadno ponavljaju koliko i Magdina: Zašto su ta vrata otvorena? Zašto netko ne zatvori vrata? Pa zašto ih netko ne popravi? Problem s Magdom je jedino što ju ni minutu ne možeš ostaviti samu, jer ćeš ju naći na ulici, kako pokušava ući u autobus, da bi išla predavati glazbene ljestvice učenicima poljske škole koja više ne postoji.

Jutro je usporeno vrijeme, kad neće da shvati osnovne stvari o dugmadima, šlicevima, četkicama za zube, češljevima. Marie-Louise, koja je rođena u Martiniquei, stiže u devet sati, pet dana u tjednu. Ona zna kako Magdu izmamiti iz kreveta, pa u odjeću. (Kupanje može potrajati tri-četvrtine sata.) Konačno, uredno obučena, držeći Marie-Louise za ruku, gledati će crtane filmove, ili kuharsku emisiju, ili muškarca u kapuljači dok vrši prepad na američku banku. Možda će reći, još uvijek držeći Marie-Louise za ruku, „Tko je ova žena? Ne sviđa mi se. Reci joj da ode."

Marie-Louise je poslala gradska socijalna skrb i ne košta ih ništa. Pravila su stroga: kućni poslovi su zabranjeni, no može, kao uslugu im, pokrenuti perilicu ili Magdi za ručak napraviti kompot od krušaka i jabuka. On u međuvremenu odlazi u kupovinu, šeta psa. Ako Marie-Louise kaže da može ostati do podneva, on se odšeta na Montparnasse i čita novine. Bijela tenda i suncobrani u Atelieru mu navode misli na jug, na dane kad su Nice i Monacko još uvijek bili u granicama njegovih mogućnosti, i ne prenatrpani. On i Magda su išli tamo svakog Uskrsa, putujući trećom klasom. Svaki korak u kružnom toku njihovog odmora on može u mislima ponovo preći: ujutro plaža, čak i ako je Uskrs pao u ožujku i more je prehladno za gacanje; za ručak piknik od kruha, sira, i voća, kojeg su jeli u ležaljkama na obali; odmor; duga šetnja, a onda presvlačenje u ispeglanu, besprijekornu odjeću – krem, i tonovi bjelokosti za Magdu, za njega bež, ili lagana odjeća mornarskog motiva. Aperitif pod bijelom tendom; večera u pansionu. (Wroblewskijevi su se u blagovaonici držali za sebe.) Poslije večere, posjeta kasinu - ne kockati se, već gledati najciviliziranije ljude Zapadne Europe kako razbacuju svoj novac. Da bi sada tako živio, čovjek bi morao biti milijunaš.

Neki dan u Montparnesse, žena sama za stolom je upalila mali radio. Glazba je ličila na ranog Mozarta ili kasnog Haydna. Nitko se nije žalio, pa su i konobari šutili. Uz tu glazbu, on je pokušao izračunati, u svotama sasvim nepovezanim s novcem, što točno njemu pripada. Zakleo bi se pred svakim sudom, zemaljskim ili božanskim, da nikad nije puzao. Glazba je stala, i jedan monoton, kultiviran glas je počeo opisivati što je maločas sviralo. Žena je prekinula glas i vratila radio u torbicu. Na nekoliko se trenutaka café učinio zamrlim; onda su do njega doprli razgovori, koraci, zveckanje žlica, auta koja prolaze: zvuci toliko poznati da zbrojeni čine tišinu. Naravno da je preklinjao. Molio je za hranu, olakšanje od boli, za putovnicu, posao. Djelići događaja, otrešeni, ostavljeni za sobom, ležali su rasuti po cesti. Samo osoba posvećena sivim svitanjima, bi se vratila unazad da ih pregleda. Po tome bi mogao pokupiti svako prljavo pismo koje vidiš kako leži u kanalu, i prozvati tu zbirku autobiografijom.

No svakako je moralo biti i vrlina. Na primjer, nikad nije prijevarom pokušao doći do koristi. Neki ljudi si cijeli život izgrade na lopovluku. Čak će se pokušati dokopati bombonijere koju gradonačelnik Pariza dijeli za Božić. Ti lukavci su možda pedesetih, šezdesetih godina, premladi da bi bili stavljeni na gradonačelnikovu listu. Ili pak imaju visoke prihode te bi stvarno za svoje užitke trebali plaćati sami. A zapravo su bogati ti koji se otrcano obuku i ušepure u zgradu lokalne općine, mašući dokaznim papirom kojem ni dijete ne bi povjerovalo. A mogli bi kupiti tonu bombonijera da to ni ne osjete!

Wroblewskijevi, niti jako dobro stojeći niti željni, svoj godišnji poklon primaju na ispravan i zakonit način. Prije otprilike četiri godine, stigla je obavijest da Magda Zaleska, udana Wroblewski, ima pravo na gradonačelnikov poklon. Taman je bila počela pokazivati znakove uzbune oko sasvim jednostavnih stvari, pa je on otišao umjesto nje, ponijevši sa sobom njenu putovnicu, stanarski ugovor s njezinim potpisom, te objašnjavajuće pismo koje je on napisao te ona potvrdila. (Nitko ga nije htio pročitati.) Sjeća se kako je kaskao gore pa dolje prije nego što je naišao na ručno ispisan znak, „Bombonijere – pokažite dokazni papir i identifikaciju.“

Kako je ispalo, bombonijera je bila zapanjujuće veličine, prevelika za ladicu ili kuhinjsku policu. Tjednima je stajala na televizoru. (Ni on ni ona nisu marili za čokolade, osim ponekad za kockicu gorke vrste s jakom crnom kavom.) Konačno je pola njih premjestio u kutiju u kojoj su mu jedni prijatelji, Poljaci, iz Engleske poslali poklon kolača i probavnih keksi, te ih otpremio Magdinoj daljnjoj sestrični. Sestrična je odgovorila da čokolade ima i u Varšavi, ali da bi joj dobro došla kutija deterdženta, ili sapuna koji čovjeku ne odere kožu.

Nešto prošlogodišnjih čokolada je iskoristio za dar pazikućiteljici, privlačno ih spakuvši u pletenu košaricu koju je bio dobio sa paketićem sušenih kajsija. Ona je skinula vrpcu i ukrasni papir, složila ih te uskliknula, „Aha! Čokolade od gradonačelnika!“ On se i danas pita kako je znala: te čokolade su odlične kvalitete i izgledaju kao bilo koje čokolade koje se mogu vidjeti u izlozima bombonjerija. Možda je i ona na listi, pa svoje šalje rodbini u Portugalu. No to je skoro pa nemoguće: bombonijera je namijenjena starijima i zaslužnima, a njoj je jedva četrdeset. Možda je ona jedna od spletkara koji su se koristili varkom - krivotvorenim rodnim listom. Pa, što s tim? Ona je vrijedna žena, marljiva i uljudna. Za jednog čovjeka za kojeg zna, kažu da je podnijeo zahtjev da isuviše loše stoji da bi plaćao godišnji porez na televiziju, i uspjelo mu je: tu u Parizu, gdje bi svaki građanin trebao biti izbrojan; gdje je cijeli život svakog legalnog imigranta pohranjen u kompjuteru ili nabijen između kartonskih korica dosjea koje zajedno drži pohabana platnena vrpca.

Kad Magdi donosi doručak na poslužavniku, izgleda kao da ide na važan sastanak – sa menadžerom banke, recimo, ili samim gradonačelnikom. Drži se sa svoje strane granice između spavanja i buđenja, motri vlastito ponašanje da bi uočio simptome zaraze – smušenost o vremenu, zaboravljanje imena, udaljavanje od poante u razgovoru. U dobroj je formi, ima dobar vid, još može čuti kako pisma klize po podu kad ih pazikućiteljica gurne ispod vrata. Bio je u Dachau deset mjeseci, zadnje zime i proljeća rata, i izgubio po jedan zub za svaki mjesec. Zamijenjeni su mu na jeftin, nemaran način: bolje nego ništa. Nijemci mu daju mjesečnu mirovinu, koja pokriva, sa malo viška, njegov skroman telefonski račun. Na niskoj je stepenici ljestvice iskupljenja. Kao prvo, kao što mu je ukazao Njemački odvjetnik koji se bavio njegovim zahtjevom, bio je tada odrastao čovjek. Završio je školu. Imao je zanimanje. Strani jezik čovjek može predavati bilo gdje u svijetu. Kad je rat završio, imao je samo nastaviti kao i prije. Ne može se pravdati da su tih deset mjeseci bili nepremostiv lom, razdvajajući prije od poslije, niti čak gubitak života. Kad je njemačku mirovinu objašnjavao poreznom službeniku, ovaj ga je pitao da li je služio u njemačkoj vojsci. Vrti mu se kad sagne glavu – nad raširene novine, naprimjer – i svaki dan pije bijelo-zelenu kapsulu, da umiri srce.

Čim Marie-Louise pozvoni na vrata, pas dovuče uzicu iz njenog mjesta u predvorju i stavi ju njemu pod noge. Hector je mladi šnaucer čekinjave dlake i razigrane naravi, kojeg su nabavili po savjetu svog liječnika, kao središnu točku za Magdinu koncentraciju. Na putu je da nadživi svog vlasnika. M. Wroblewski se pripremio za to: preuzeti će ga pazikućiteljica. Ona to jedva čeka. Ponekad kaže Hectoru, „Eto nas, samo nas dvoje," kao da je M. Wroblewski već među nestalima. Šetati Hectora se čini sve težim i težim. Parižani auta ostavljaju na rubovima pločnika bez inča slobodnog prostora; iza njih promet leti kao olujna tuča. Kad je baš Magda, od svih ljudi, primijetila da nedostaje onih nekoliko drveća, osjetio je nerazuman očaj, kao da je sve što je njemu važno, do zadnjeg, posječeno. Što nas ne ostave na miru, pomislio je? Već je duže vrijeme u sebi vodio razgovore, s nikim posebno. Onda je stiglo pismo i počeo se obraćati svom prijatelju. Izbjegava određene riječi, poput „problem,“ „poteškoća,“ „katastrofa,“ te umjesto njih kaže „Stanje stvari.“

Opozvane su Nansen putovnice. Troje ljudi koje pozna, u godinama od osamedeset i jedne do osamdeset i osme, su primili pisma od Francuskog Ministarstva za Vanjske Poslove: zavod koji se bavi tim rijetkim i posebnim putovnicama se zatvara. Poljske političke izbjeglice više ne postoje. Pretvorili su se u Poljske građane (prvi put da oni to čuju) te trebaju podnijeti molbu za shodne dokumente vlastitoj ambasadi. Dvoje od tih novih građana su rezbar, koji još uvijek radi u negrijanom ateljeu sa krajnje strane Montmartre, i drugi umjetnik, žena, koja je jednom oblikovala Magdin lik s jakom, zapanjujućom sličnošću. Nije mogla priuštiti da ga da na lijevanje, a original se ili razbio ili izgubio – ne sjeća se. Tek kroz umjetničko djelo je shvatio ljepotu svoje žene. Dotada se ponosio njezinim šarmom i osobnošću. Voljeo ju je gledati za klavirom; više je, možda, gledao nego slušao. Treća osoba je bivši kritičar istočno Europske književnosti koji je u jednom trenutku pao u depresiju i prestao se truditi oko pisama.

„. . . i tako, ipso facto, Poljski građani,“ rekao je rezbar M. Wroblewskiju preko telefona. „Što će s nama? Otkrcati nas nazad u Poljsku? U našim godinama, bolje nam je bez države.“ Možda je tako. Nikada ne putuju i putovnice im ne trebaju. Svi imaju gdje stanovati, prihode neke vrste. Dvoje od tih troje čak još uvijek zarađuje. Brinu se, na neki način, jedno za drugo.

Nitko ne pravi potez. Kako kaže rezbar, kad imaš posla sa birokracijom svjetske klase, pametnije je sjediti i šutiti. Dok se ti odlučiš kako reagirati, sva su se pravila mogla već promijeniti.

To i je i nije istina. Pijuna se može tiho pomaknuti bez da se digne pobuna. Stav M. Wroblewskog naginje obrambenim linijama. Neki službenik u ministarstvu vjerovatno križa imena po abecednom redu, i nije ni blizu slova „w.“ Nakon nekolicine nevažećih početaka, napisao je i poslao pismo na Quai d'Orsay u kojem traži francusko državljanstvo. Mogao je, naravno, predati zahtjev još godinama ranije, no u starim danima odbijanje je bilo toliko redovno da je čovjek ostao obeshrabren već na početku. Dok su on i Magda dobili posao, stan, svoje dragocjene putovnice, zadnje što su htjeli je bilo ispuniti još jedan formular, stajati u još jednom redu. U pismu nije spominjao izbjeglice, status, ni državljanstvo – osim ono francusko – već skrenuo pažnju na broj godina koje živi u Francuskoj, na tečno znanje jezika, i koliko cijeni francusku kulturu. Govorio je o prastarim povijesnim vezama između Poljske i Francuske, kratko se dotakao priče o Napoleonu i Mme. Waleskoj, te podsjetio Ministarstvo da nikad nije kasnio sa stanarinom niti prekoračio bankovni račun.

(Poslao je pismo prije više od mjesec dana. Za sada nije bilo obavijesti iz Quai d'Orsaya: odličan znak. Na službenoj šutnji se može ploviti sa savršenom sigurnošću.)

U međuvremenu, iskrslo je nešto novo. Prije otprilike tri tjedna primio je od banke osobno pismo, napisano na pravoj pisaćoj mašini, potpisano pravom tintom: bez brošura, bez prospekata, bez slika sijedih parova koji uživaju u Veneciji ili gledaju Sfinksi u oči. Tu je bila samo osobna poruka i još jedna stvar, potvrda. „Potvrda“ je bilo odštampano debelim crnim slovima, zajedno s njegovim imenom, točno napisanim. Mme. Carole Fournier, iz Službe za savjetovanje korisnika, ga je molila da potpiše potvrdu, zatraži sastanak i donese ju u njen ured. (Njezin potpis mu se učinio otvorenim i pouzdanim, ali još životno neiskušanim.) Po riječima Mme. Fournier, te iz nerazjašnjenih razloga, on se nalazio među pregrštom štediša – svojevrsnih aristokrata – kojima je banka nudila kredit gotovine od petnaest tisuća franaka. Taj kredit nije bio zajam, niti prekoračenje računa, nego rezerva u koju može posegnuti, bez plaćanja kamata, kad god mu zatreba gotov novac a ne želi dirati ušteđevinu. Svote dignute iz tog fonda bi bile zamijenjene u ratama od dvije tisuće franaka mjesečno, prebačene s njegovog tekućeg računa. Nije bilo kamata niti nadoplate: taj dio je pročitao dva puta.

Za petnaest tisuća franaka, pretpostavljao je, mogao bi letiti do Australije, ili otići na krstarenje po Karibima. Mogao bi Magdi kupiti raskošnu bundu. Ništa od toga on neće učiniti, no ponuda je velikodušna i nije za odbaciti bez razmišljanja. Račun je otvorio sa čekom od prve plaće u Francuskoj: možda mu je banka htjela iskazati zahvalnost za godine odanosti. Osim tekućeg računa, posjedovao je i dva štedišna računa. Jedan od njih je slobodan od poreza, zakonom ograničen na polog od petnaest tisuća franaka – igrom slučaja, upravo iznos koji mu sada nude. Neki ljudi, pretpostavljao je, bi sve zgrabili i profućkali na bezvezarije, onda bili potišteni i kajali se dok bi gledali od mjeseca do mjeseca kako im tekući račun nestaje. Taj poklon je bio vedar balon sa dugačkom uzicom. Uzica se mogla dodavati iz ruke u ruku – do banke i nazad. On je sebe vidio kako se čvrsto drži za uzicu.

Prije nego što je imao šansu išta oko toga poduzeti, dobio je napad vrtoglavice na ulici i morao ući u privatnu galeriju umjetnina i zamoliti ih da sjedne. (Nisu bili vrlo ljubazni. Bila je samo jedna stolica, zauzeta ženom koja je adresirala kuverte.) Liječnik mu je naredio da si uzme tjedan dana odmora, poželjno miljama daleko od kuće. Pripreme koje su bile potrebne – naći nekoga da spava u stanu, još dvoje njih da dođu poslijepodne i preko vikenda – su bile napornije nego jednostavno nastaviti; no on je poslušao, ništa nije ostavio nedovršeno, Hectora je predao pazikućiteljici i uhvatio vlak za Saint-Malo. Prije puno godina, u doba sporih vlakova i prohladnih hotela, bio je tu odveo neke svoje učenike. Oni su, ne prigovarajući, jeli suhe sendviče i jabuke, i koštice bacali sa bedema. Ovog puta je bio sam, u kišnoj sezoni. Pod lijućim kišobranom šetao je opet po bedemima i kad se nebo razvedrilo posjetio grob Chateaubrianda; s ruba groba pogledom je odmjerio ocean. I ovdje je bio vodio svoje učenike, i ispričao im sve o Chateaubriandu (sve što su mogli upiti), ali im nije rekao da je Sartre urinirao na njegov grob. To im je moglo biti smiješno.

Ostavio je grob i more i krenuo natrag prema gradu u zidinama. Pomislio je i na druga oskvrnuća, i na nečistoću koja se može preliti po tihim životima. U tamnom poslijepodnevu, osvijetljeni prozori su izgledali nepristupačni, nemareći i ravnodušni. Napisati će svom prijatelju, „Pitao sam se što ja tu tražim, gledam u tuđe prozore, kad imam sam svoj dom.“ Sljedeći dan je promijenio rezervaciju i vratio se u Pariz prije nego što je tjednu došao kraj.

Magda ga je prepoznala ali nije znala da ga nije bilo. Pitala ga je da li mu je smetao susjed koji je cijele noći na klaviru svirao Schuberta. (Možda je i postojao taj glazbenik, ponekad je mislio, i samo ga je Magda mogla čuti.) „Moraš mu reći da prestane,“ rekla je. Obećao je da hoće.

Mme. Carole Fournier, Služba za Savjetovanje Korisnika, se pokazala privlačnom mladom ženom, možda malkice mršavom u licu. Njeni usukani obrazi su joj davali ptičji izgled, no kad se okrenula prema ekranu kompjutera pored stola, njezin profil ga je podsjetio na glumicu, Elzbietu Barszczewsku. Kad je Barszczewska umrla, u svojoj bijeloj vjenčanici, na kraju filma koji se zvao *Gubavac*, cijela Varšava je pala u žalost. Pored Barszczewske, Pola Negri je bila ništa.

Plastični okviri na naočalima Mme. Fournier su se slagali sa dvima crvenim ukosnicama u njenjoj kosi. Njen ured je bio bijeli predgradak sa velikim prozorom i bez vrata. Njezin kompjuter, kao i svi koje je primijetio u banci, je imao ekran boje plavetnila. To je izazivalo predodžbu beskonačnosti. Na toj azurnoj površini je mogao, bez naprezanja, pročitati činjenice o samom sebi: datum rođenja, za primjer. Kroz bijele poprečne žaluzine na prozoru, primijetio je pekaru i poštu gdje je kupovao markice i slao pisma. Hector, zavezan za željezni stup između biciklova, okovanih lancima i pod lokotom, bio je taman izvan vidika. Da je prozor bio otvoren, možda bi se čulo njegovo tugaljivo lajanje. M. Wroblewski je htio ustati i uvjeriti se da psa netko nije kidnapirao, no to bi značilo prekinuti šarmantnu Mme. Fournier.

Još jednom je bacila pogled na plavi ekran, pa vratila pažnju upitniku od četiri stranice na stolu. Očekivao je dobrodošlicu. Do sada je to bilo ispitivanje. „Ispričavam se," rekla je. „Posao mi je. Moram vas ovo pitati. Da li ste stariji od šezdeset i šest godina?"

„Polaskan sam da bi uopće mogli u to posumnjati," počeo je. Činila se tako mlada; glas mu je imao notu šale. Mogla mu je biti unuka, da generacije teku kako bi to statistike htjele. Možda bi poslao njezinu sliku prijatelju u Varšavi: crvene ukosnice, male ruke, privjesak horoskopskog znaka (Blizanci) na lančiću. Preko puta, iz pekare je izašao dječak, noseći više dugačkih kruhova, možda za restoran. Ona je čekala. Koliko dugo već čeka? Penkalo joj je visilo nad upitnikom.

„Svoj šezdeset i šesti rođendan sam slavio na dan kad je umro General de Gaulle," rekao je. „Ne želim reći da sam slavio smrt tog izvanrednog čovjeka. Bilo mi je jako žao. Bio sam u kazalištu, sa ženom. Predstava je bila *Ondine*, sa Isabellom Adjani. To joj je bila prva važna uloga. Mora da joj je bilo sedamnaest godina. Bila je ljubimica Pariza. Krasna. Nimfa. Nakon spuštanja zastora, izašao je direktor kazališta, okrenuo se gledalištu, i rekao da je predsjednik mrtav." Činilo se da ona i dalje čeka. Nastavio je, „Gledalište je zinulo. Izašli smo u koloni bez priče. Moja žena je konačno rekla, 'Jadan čovjek. I kako tužno, na tvoj rođendan.' Ja sam rekao, 'To je povijest.' Išli smo kući pješke, po kiši. U onim danima moglo se ići ulicom poslije ponoći. Nije bilo opasnosti."

Razaznanje joj se na licu ocrtalo samo pri spomenu Isabelle Adjani. Osjećao se dužan dodati, „Mislim da sam pogriješio. To ipak nije bio predsjednik de Gaulle. Predsjednik Georges Pompidou je bio taj čija je smrt objavljena u svim kazalištima u Parizu. Nisam siguran za Adjanijevu. Moja žena je uvijek čuvala kazališne programe. Mogu to provjeriti, ako vas zanima."

„Oko toga da li imate preko šezdeset i šest godina," rekla je. „Morati ćete izvaditi posebnu policu osiguranja. To je da se banka zaštiti, vidite. Ne košta puno."

„Ja jesam osiguran."

„Znam. Ovo je za banku." Okrenula je upitnik da bi on mogao pročitati pitanje u jednoj kocki: „Da li pijete lijekove na dnevnoj bazi?"

„Svi mojih godina nešto piju."

„Oprostite. Moram pitati. Da li ste ozbiljno bolesni?"

„Kronična pritužba. Ništa opasno." Stavio je ruku preko srca.

Uzela je upitnik, ispričala se još jednom, i ostavila ga samog. Na ekranu je pročitao brojeve od svoja tri računa, i datume kada je svaki otvorio. Sjetio se Hectora, ustao, no prije nego što je mogao doći do prozora, Mme. Fournier se vratila.

„Ispričavam se," rekla je. „Ispričavam se što toliko dugo traje. Molim vas, sjednite. Još nešto vas moram pitati."

„Pokušavao sam vidjeti svog psa."

„O vašoj kroničnoj bolesti. Da li bi mogli iznenada umrijeti?"

„Nadam se da ne."

„Razgovarala sam sam sa M. Giroudom. Morati ćete napraviti liječnički pregled. Ne, ne kod vašeg liječnika," preduhitrila ga je. „Kod liječnika od osiguravajuće kompanije. To nije za banku. To je za njih – za osiguranje." Bila je starija nego što je on pretpostavio. Neugoda i njene krinke su joj stegnule lice, dale joj oko trideset i pet. Mladenački potpis je bio varka. „M. Wroblewski," rekla je, sa dobrim pokušajem da izgovori suglasnike, „da li je vrijedno svega ovoga, petneast tisuća franaka? Mi bi odobrili prekoračenje, ako bi vam zatrebalo. No, naravno, bilo bi kamata na to."

„Želio sam taj fond iz baš tog razloga kojeg ste upravo spomenuli – u slučaju da iznenada umrem. Kad umrem, računi će mi biti zamrznuti, zar ne? Volio bih malo gotovine za moju ženu. Mislio sam da bi mogao svog liječnika učiniti odgovornim. On bi mogao potpisati – što god. Moja žena je suviše bolesna da bi povela brigu o sprovodu, ili platila ljude koji se za nju brinu. Proći će vremena dok oporuka bude sređena."

„Žao mi je," rekla je. „Iskreno mi je žao. To nije račun. To je rezerva gotovine. Ako vi umrete, ona prestaje postojati."

„Rezerva gotovine, koju drži banka, pod mojim imenom, je račun," rekao je. „Ja to ne bih ni koristio ni dirao za svog života."

„To nije vaš novac," rekla je. „Ne na taj način kako vi mislite. Ispričavam se. Oprostite. To pismo vam uopće nije trebalo biti poslano."

„Banka zna moje godine. Tu su, na ekranu."

„Znam. Ispričavam se. Ja nisam ta koja šalje te stvari."

„Ali ih potpisujete?"

„Ne šaljem ih."

Rukovali su se. Namjestio je šešir u dražestan kut. Sve što je imao na sebi taj dan je izgledalo novo, čak i svileni šal, siv sa sitnom žutom mustrom, kojeg je Magda kupila u butiku Arnys, na Rue de Sèvres – pa, prije nekih petnaest godina. Ništa nije bilo izlizano ili izblijedjelo. Kao da nikad ništa nije iznosio. Nokti su mu bili podrezani, ruke bez mrlja. Još uvijek je pušio tri Craven A na dan, no suzdržao se u prisustvu Mme. Fournier, pošto nije vidio pepeljaru na njenom stolu. Na njemu, zapravo, nije bilo ništa osim upitnika. Trebao joj je donijeti neku bombonijeru; smetalo ga je što je propustio tu ljubaznost. Nije joj ništa zamjerao. Činila se sposobna, obzirna u svom ponašanju.

„Vaši računi su u izvrsnom stanju," rekla je. „To mora da vam je jedna briga manje. Mi bi mogli dozvoliti. . .U svakom slučaju, dođite i obratite mi se ako budete imali neki problem."

„Moj problem je moja vlastita smrt," rekao je, smiješeći se.

„Ne smijete tako razmišljati." Dotakla je svoj talisman, Blizance, kao da bi joj on stvarno mogao ostvariti dupli život: jedan sa neprilikama i jedan bez. „Molim vas oprostite nam. M. Giroud se ispričava. Ja također."

Nakon onog posla s pismom i pitanja o Prusiji ovog jutra, Magda je bila tiha. Pustio ju je da popije čaj (zna zaboraviti da drži šalicu) i pokušao ju uvući u razgovor o pogledu s prozora.

Ona je rekla, „Susjed i dalje svira Schuberta cijelu noć. Drži me budnom. Tužno je kad prestane."

Njihovi susjedi su par koji ide na posao. Televiziju gase u deset i nema nikakvog zvuka do pola sedam u jutro, kad slušaju vijesti. U petneast do osam zaključavaju vrata i zovu dizalo, i stan je opet tih do doba večere. Nitko ne svira Schuberta.

Uzeo je poslužavnik. Kad je stigao do vrata ona je rekla prijaznim, jednoličnim glasom, „Klavir me držao budnom."

„Znam," rekao je. „Muškarac koji svira Schuberta."

„Koji muškarac? Muškarci ništa ne znaju svirati."

„Žena? Netko koga poznaš?"

Stajao je mirno, i čekao. Rekao je svom prijatelju, Ako dobijem odgovor, znači da je ozdravila. No ona će se ukopati pod pokrivače i jastuke dok ne dođe Marie-Louise. Kad Marie-Louise bude tu, ja ću izaći susresti se s tobom, ili s mišlju o tebi, koja me sada nikad ne napušta. Gledati ćemo u one zidove od ogledala preko puta bulevara i ocijeniti dan po bojama: svijetlo-zlatna, siva, bijelo-plava. Pusti mi da objasnim. Daj mi vremena. Sa te udaljenosti tmina nema nikakvu moć. Nema sama svoj život. Ona je samo odraz.

Danas ću ponijeti blok papira za pisanje i adresiranu kuvertu sa poštanskom markom. Možeš me zamisliti, za stolom iza prozora. (Postaje malo prohladno za ulicu.) Imam mladog psa. Kao što vidiš, još uvijek sam dosadno optimističan. Magda je dobro. Jutros smo razgovarali o Schubertu. Šteta je što si lošeg zdravlja i ne možeš putovati. Inače bi mogao doći tu i unajmili bi auto i vozili se negdje – ti, Magda, pas, i ja. Žao mi je za emisiju na radiju i njen učinak na neke niske ljude. I ovdje ima izopačenih umova – ne bi vjerovao što se događa. Netko je na sastanku rekao, „Hitler živi!“ – tako su mi rekli. Valjda policija ne može biti svuda. Molim te dobro pazi na sebe. Tvoja pisma su mi dragocjena. Imamo toliko sjećanja. Da li se sjećaš *Gubavca*, i scene u kojoj ona umre na svom vjenčanju? Bila je daleko ljepša od Garbove ili Dietrichove – zar nije? Voljeo bih da ti imam više za reći, ali život mi je kao mačkino predenje. Da ti ga opišem, uspavao bi te. Možda ću ti imati više reći sutra. U međuvremenu, šaljem ti naklonost Božju.

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